MEN OF POWER

FRED EASTMAN

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Brief but authoritative are these sketches of Benjamin Franklin, George Fox, Charles Darwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson. With challenging directness the author investigates the sources of power from which grew each man's greatness. Each life-story is made vital and compellingly dramatic by the use of pertinent anecdotes and illustrations.

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MEN OF POWER

FIVE BOOKS OF SIXTY-MINUTE BIOGRAPHIES OF GREAT MEN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THEIR SOURCES OF POWER

By FRED EASTMAN, *Litt.D.*

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The subjects for Vols. IV and V are tentative

MEN OF POWER

VOL. III

SIXTY-MINUTE BIOGRAPHIES

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
RALPH WALDO EMERSON
GEORGE FOX
CHARLES DARWIN

By
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"THE SEARCH AFTER THE GREAT IS THE DREAM OF YOUTH, AND THE MOST SERIOUS OCCUPATION OF MANHOOD."

RALPH WALDO EMERSON,
in *Representative Men.*

FOREWORD

I shall try to *explain* these men, not expose or glorify them. They all had power. Where did they get it? They accomplished great things for the common good. Why? Together with the men in the four other volumes in this series they bequeathed to us no small part of our social, scientific, political, and spiritual heritage. How? To paraphrase Shakespeare's line,

> The cause, dear reader, was not in their stars,
> But in themselves, that they were men of power.

In these studies I hope to discover the influences that operated to lift these men above the level of the commonplace and to set their feet on higher ground. I shall present each man's heredity, his cultural and national background, his early home and school, his friendships, his purposes, his habits of work, his opponents, and his philosophy of life. From these considerations it may be possible to construct an understandable picture of his growing personality. Such biographical portraits will give more attention to each man's early struggles than to his later accomplishments, more importance to what went on within his heart as a youth and young man than to the honors that came to him as an old man.

Gratefully I acknowledge the constructive criticism of my wife, whose passion for accuracy has saved me from many a slip and whose encouragement has kept me at the task. My thanks also to my young colleagues, Edward Ouellette and Thomas Dick, for their assistance in preparing the sketches in this volume.

F. E.

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MEN OF POWER

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

1706-1790

FRANKLIN had a grand time. He found fun in more ways than most people can find trouble. He loved life. The world for him was full of wonders—wonders to be investigated, understood, and enjoyed. He had an insatiable curiosity about everything from fertilizers and smoky chimneys to musical instruments and politics. Optimism radiated from him—optimism about the universe in general and young America in particular. He rose from poverty to affluence like a hero in one of Horatio Alger's novels; but, unlike most storybook heroes, he devoted the remaining forty-two years of his life to public service, much of it at little or no salary. At eighty-three he was still going strong.

He left behind him an amazing list of accomplishments; among them these: he started the first lending library in this country; he organized a remarkable debating club out of which grew the American Philosophical Society; he established four publications—*The Pennsylvania Gazette, The Philadelphia Zeitung, Poor*

Richard's Almanac, and *The General Magazine and Historical Quarterly;* he showed farmers how to improve their crops by the use of fertilizer; he proved that lightning is electricity; he invented a new and economical kind of stove and a more effective variety of street lighting; he designed bifocal lenses for spectacles; he founded an academy which grew into the University of Pennsylvania; he organized the police force of Philadelphia and its first fire company; he was the first to advocate a union of the colonies and collective bargaining with the mother company; he was sent by the colonies to represent them in England; he was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and one of the framers of the Constitution; he secured the aid of France for the colonies in the Revolutionary War; he served two terms as Governor of Pennsylvania. The man who achieved such distinction was no storybook hero; he was a statesman, a practical scientist, and a man of power.

His Times. He was born in Boston, January 17, 1706, amid yeasty times. New ideas were fermenting in the minds of men throughout Europe. The doctrine of the divine right of kings was tottering, its foundations wrecked by tyrannous monarchs and its doom sealed by the unanswerable arguments of John Milton. John Locke with his *Essay on Human Understanding* had championed civil and religious liberty. J. J. Rousseau was soon to carry the idea further in his *Social Contract* and pave the way for new experiments in

democracy and for two revolutions. Isaac Newton had promulgated revolutionary theories in science; Handel and Bach in music.

Yet few of these new ideas had penetrated the New World. The early settlers were too busy clearing forests, guarding their scalps from Indians, and trying to establish themselves to pay much attention to what went on along the frontiers of thought in Europe. Books were few, magazines fewer, and no community yet had a public library. Nor did anyone in this country care much about what went on in the Old World. The Pilgrims and their successors had cut loose from intolerable conditions there and were now working out their own salvation here. All they wanted was to be let alone. Their relations with England were none too happy, but no one seriously thought of rebelling against her. She was still the mother country to which they were bound by family as well as by economic ties.

Ministers, Puritan and Anglican, were practically the only educators. In New England Roger Williams and the Mathers, Cotton and his son Increase, had thundered the Puritan gospel. The Quakers had taken root in various settlements between Virginia and Rhode Island, and George Fox, their founder and leader, had spent two years among them encouraging the faithful and winning thousands of converts. But not even the best of religious leaders had as yet done much thinking along the social lines of Locke and Rousseau. Individual rather than social salvation was the keynote of

the message of the churches, and individual salvation was mostly—with the notable exception of the Quakers—in terms of otherworldliness. For this reason the churches were to make small appeal to Benjamin Franklin. His interests were to center in *this* world and in changing it for the better.

Heredity. His ancestors on his father's side had lived for three hundred years or more in the same village, Ecton, England, about sixty miles from London and only a few miles from the ancestral home of George Washington. The Washingtons were rich, the Franklins poor, and it is doubtful if the two families ever met while in England. The Franklins had been holders of some thirty acres of land and were blacksmiths by trade. Though poor, they had been independent thinkers and had espoused the cause of the Protestants against the papists when to do so meant severe persecution. Benjamin's great-great-grandfather had secured an English Bible (Protestant) which, during the persecutions, he had to conceal. He did so by fastening it with tapes to the under side of a stool. When he wished to read it to his family, he would first post one child at the doorway to stand watch (lest some officer sweep down upon them) and then invert the stool and read from the book. Benjamin's grandfather, Thomas, had four sons—at least two of whom showed more than ordinary ingenuity in mechanical affairs and a disposition to break out in print on public issues. The youngest of these sons,

Josiah, was Benjamin's father. (In fact, Benjamin was the youngest son of the youngest son for five generations back.)

Josiah married young and brought his wife and three children to New England about 1682. There he had four more children by his first wife and ten more by a second wife. In the old country he had been a dyer by trade, but finding little use for this skill in America he took up candle- and soap-making. Benjamin in his autobiography thus describes him:

He had an excellent constitution of body, was of middle stature, but well set, and very strong; he was ingenious, could draw prettily, was skilled a little in music and had a clear pleasing voice . . . but his great excellence lay in a sound understanding and solid judgment in prudential matters, both in private and public affairs. . . . I remember well his being frequently visited by leading people, who consulted him for his opinion in affairs of the town or of the church he belonged to, and showed a good deal of respect for his judgment and advice; he was also much consulted by private persons about their affairs when any difficulty occurred, and frequently chosen an arbitrator between contending parties.

His mother, Josiah's second wife, was Abiah Folger, daughter of one of the first settlers of New England. Of her he writes more briefly, saying that she, too, had an excellent constitution, that she suckled all her ten children, and that he never knew her to have any sick-

ness but that of which she died at the age of eighty-five. (His father died at eighty-nine.) Over their graves in Boston Benjamin placed a marble stone with this inscription:

Josiah Franklin
and
Abiah his wife,
lie here interred.
They lived lovingly together in wedlock
fifty-five years.
Without an estate, or any gainful employment,
by constant labor and industry,
with God's blessing,
they maintained a large family
comfortably,
and brought up thirteen children
and seven grandchildren
reputably.
From this instance, reader,
be encouraged to diligence in thy calling,
and distrust not Providence.
He was a pious and prudent man;
she, a discreet and virtuous woman.
Their youngest son,
in filial regard to their memory,
places this stone.
J. F. born 1655, died 1744, Ætat 89.
A. F. born 1667, died 1752, Ætat 85.

Early Home and Environment. The home of the Franklins was plentifully supplied with children—but with little else. As many as thirteen of them gathered

around the parental board at one time. Naturally, most of the father's modest income had to go for food. Yet he had a few books, chiefly on religious subjects and of a polemic nature. Benjamin seems to have read them all—and they set his mind forever against the ministry. But among them he afterward recalled a few that he found rewarding: Plutarch's *Lives* most of all, De Foe's *Essay on Projects,* and Cotton Mather's *Essay upon the Good That Is Devised and Designed by Those Who Desire to Answer the Great End of Life and to Do Good While They Live.* The latter he credited with profoundly influencing his life because of its persuasive appeal for applied goodness in everyday living.

Of the other brothers and sisters in that home we know next to nothing. The girls married; the boys entered various trades but made no particular stir in the life of the community. James is the only one mentioned in the numerous biographies, and he simply because he gave Benjamin a series of beatings that turned the latter away from his first job and toward a new career. Of these beatings, more later.

Boston, at the time of Benjamin's childhood, had a population of some seven or eight thousand. Puritan in tradition, the people lived austerely with few comforts and fewer luxuries. Around the wharves there was considerable bustle, for here foreign ships unloaded their cargoes, and sailors told news of the Old World. Here the children played, and here Benjamin began to think of the sea as his home when he grew up; for the

sailors told him stories of their adventures, tales that made the quiet city of the narrow twisting streets seem dull and drab.

Early Struggles. A few scenes from his early years may give a fairly accurate picture of the growing boy and the influences that were molding the man he was to become. The first occurs when he is about six. It is a holiday, and he has been given some coppers to buy something for himself. He has seen another boy blowing a new kind of whistle. He wants one like it for himself. So off to the shop he runs, finds the whistle, gives all his pennies for it without a question, and hurries home in triumph. There he toots the thing to his own great enjoyment, but to the annoyance of everyone else in that crowded domicile. Finally his brothers and sisters ask him how much he paid for the toy; and when they hear, they tell him that it was about four times too much. And they go on to remind him of all the other desirable things he might have had with his money. They laugh at him until he cries with vexation. Somewhere in the back of his head he registers a resolve which he is often to recall in later years and in larger transactions: "Don't pay too much for the whistle."

Two years later we see him in the Boston Grammar School where his father has placed him with the expectation of dedicating him, as the tithe of his ten sons, to the ministry. Benjamin has no inclination in that direction, but he loves to read and soon stands at the

head of his class and is promoted to the class above. By this time, however, his father, counting the cost of continuing the lad through college, and finding it too great for his small means, gives up the idea of a classical education for Benjamin and transfers him to a school kept by George Brownell, who had attained a considerable reputation as a teacher of writing and mathematics. There the boy stays for a year, learning the elements of writing, but failing in arithmetic.

At ten his father takes him from school to help in the business of making candles and soap. There we find him, a growing discontent within him, working all day, six days a week, cutting wicks, filling the candle molds, attending shop, and running errands. But when his day's stint is done, he is off to the water front or to the nearer millpond to swim and play with boats and canoes. He puts so much pent-up energy into this play and develops so much skill in swimming and in handling the boats that the other boys of the neighborhood make him their leader. Among other things, he learns how to fly a kite while swimming and to make the kite help pull him along in the water.

Sometimes, however, he leads his playfellows into scrapes. One day, for instance, he proposes that they build a wharf on the edge of the millpond. Yes, but where to get the materials? He points out to them a heap of stones near by—stones which belonged to a neighbor who intended them for use in a house he was building. So that evening, after the builders have gone,

Benjamin and his gang take the stones and, working busily with an energy they had never shown in household chores, carry the stones away and build their wharf. The next morning the house-builders discover the theft and complain to the boys' parents. Various painful sessions in the woodhouse follow. Benjamin tries to argue with his father that the wharf would really be a very useful thing, but his father persuades him that nothing is useful which is not honest.

Meanwhile, his discontent with the drudgery of candle- and soap-making increases, and his yearning for the life of a sailor becomes almost a fixed purpose. His father, convinced that his youngest son is cut out for better things, patiently concentrates what time he can borrow from his business to taking the lad around town and showing him other trades and the openings they offer to bright boys. Thus he introduces him to bricklayers, carpenters, turners, glassmakers, and cutlery manufacturers; but Benjamin finds in none of their trades the adventurous possibilities of the sea. So, fearing that his son might take things into his own hands and run away, Josiah hits upon a new plan. Benjamin has shown an unusual liking for books. Would he not like to be apprenticed to his own brother James as a printer? Yes, this is more agreeable. To learn the printing trade and perhaps someday to print books—that might not be as exciting as sailing the seas, but it would be better than making candles or boiling soap. So at twelve Benjamin is apprenticed to his

brother James, lately returned from learning the trade in London. After the custom of those days, Benjamin signs a paper of indenture by which he binds himself to serve his brother faithfully as an apprentice for nine years, or until he is twenty-one.

When we see him again, some two or three years later, he is alone in the printing shop reading a copy of Addison and Steele's *Spectator* and working out an experiment with it. In the intervening years he has worked daily at long hours and low wages. He has borrowed books from booksellers' clerks and read them hastily at night so that they might be returned next morning before being missed. He has composed some doggerel and had two of his poems published (one dealing with a shipwreck and the other with a pirate), and of late he has been trying his hand at prose. But his father, reading some of it, has pointed out that it lacks clearness and order and elegance. Benjamin has resolved on improvement. He has found in the *Spectator* a delightful style which achieves the virtues he has missed. So at night he returns to the shop and sets himself to the task of imitating the *Spectator's* English. In his own words:

With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiments in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should

come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them.

Another method is to take stories and tell them in verse, "since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme" puts him under the necessity of searching for variety. After he has told the story in verse, he lays it aside a few days; and, coming to it fresh, he puts it back into prose, often discovering that he has made certain improvements on the original. By such lessons, self-assigned and self-taught, night after night and on Sundays, he seeks to develop a capacity to express himself exactly and gracefully. For he is "extremely ambitious," he says, "to come in time to be a tolerable English writer."

The next scene reveals him carrying this self-discipline a step further. Knowing that his school days are over and that he has, as yet, only a smattering of education, he determines to acquire more. Among his friends are one or two who have small libraries from which they are willing to lend him a few books. His problem is how to find the spare time to read them and the spare cash to buy some for himself. Having read of the benefits to purse and health of a vegetable diet, he goes to his brother James with this proposition: "James," he says in effect, "you are now paying me so much for my board. If you will give me half that amount I will board myself." To this James instantly

agrees. So Benjamin works out a vegetable diet which he can easily prepare. By frugal management he boards himself on about half the amount his brother now allows him, investing the remainder in books. He eats his lunch (often consisting only of bread, raisins, and a baker's tart [1]) at the shop while the others have gone out for theirs and still has half an hour for reading.

Having thus solved the problem of time and cash for books, he now takes up the study of arithmetic, in which he failed at school, and by his own method masters its rudiments. He follows it with a course in elementary geometry, learned from a book on navigation. Next he reads Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* and Royal's *Art of Thinking*. Then he labors through an English grammar in which he comes across a specimen of a Socratic dialogue. It strikes him so forcibly that he procures Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates* where he finds other examples of the Greek philosopher's method of discussing great questions and making his opponents confute their own arguments. In his autobiography Benjamin describes the effect upon his own habits of discussion:

I was charmed with it, adopted it, dropt my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter. . . . I . . . practiced it continually, and grew very artful and expert in draw-

[1] He did not remain a strict vegetarian for more than a few years, but often returned to a vegetable diet for his health's sake.

ing people, even of superior knowledge, into concessions, the consequences of which they did not foresee. . . . I continued this method some few years, but gradually left it, retaining only the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence; never using, when I advanced anything that may possibly be disputed, the words *certainly, undoubtedly* . . . but rather . . . *I should think it so or so, for such and such reasons,* or *it is so, if I am not mistaken.* This habit, I believe, has been of great advantage to me when I have had occasion to inculcate my opinions, and persuade men into measures that I have been from time to time engaged in promoting. . . .

Now comes an episode in which the developing youth begins to try his literary wings. His brother has started a small newspaper, *The New England Courant,* the fourth to be published in America. It is devoted, as the others were, to discussions of religious and public affairs of the city and colony. Benjamin helps to set the type and operate the small hand-press, and sells the paper on the streets. Listening to the approving comments of the contributors and the readers, he is excited to make his own contribution to its columns. Realizing that his brother would hardly welcome anything from himself, a lad of fifteen years, he composes a piece under the assumed name of "Mrs. Silence Dogood" and slips it one evening under the door of the shop. Next morning he has the exquisite pleasure of hearing his brother and the older men read it and commend it. He writes thirteen more such articles before his stock

of ideas runs out. Then he confesses to James their true authorship. James is amazed and not altogether pleased. This apprentice seems to him rather presumptuous. A few beatings might help to keep him in his place.

The beatings are given, but they lead only to increasing estrangement between the brothers. This estrangement comes to a climax in a few months after a series of difficulties between the local authorities and the paper. James attacks the government for its efforts to prevent the spread of smallpox by a method of vaccination that had been used in England. His strictures become so obnoxious that he is thrown into prison for a month. Later the government cracks down upon him again and forbids him to print his paper unless he will first submit its contents for censorship to the Secretary of the Province. Unwilling to do this, he devises a plan by which Benjamin shall be the nominal publisher. To avoid the charge that this is only a ruse by which he is continuing the publication through his apprentice he cancels Benjamin's original papers of indenture but makes him sign a new set which he keeps secret.

Thus the *Courant* goes on, but so do the quarrels between the brothers. James is harsh and overbearing; Benjamin high-spirited, saucy, and provocative. At length, after a bitter scene, more violent than usual, in which James gives Benjamin a severe beating, the boy, knowing that James will not dare to make the new secret indentures public, quits his brother's service. In

revenge James goes about Boston and blackballs Benjamin among the other printers so that he is unable to secure employment with any of them. In this crisis Benjamin resolves to strike out for himself. Selling his precious books to raise passage money, he goes to New York. (New York in those days was smaller than Boston and had only one print shop and no bookstore.) After fruitless search for work there he hears of a possible opening in Phidadelphia and again embarks, hoping to reach that city before his funds are entirely exhausted.

He is embarking on trouble. The vessel on which he sails is a "crazy old boat with rotten sails, manned by only one boatman." A storm besets it before it has crossed New York Bay; the only other passenger, a drunken Dutchman, falls overboard, and Benjamin rescues him. For thirty hours without food or sleep they toss on turbulent waves before they finally reach Amboy, New Jersey. There Benjamin, bedraggled and half sick, sets out on foot to walk the fifty miles to Philadelphia. Heavy rains delay him so that the journey takes three days. The last part of it he makes by another boat in which he helps at the rowing.

Arriving in Philadelphia, weary, footsore, disheartened, and with only a Dutch dollar to his name, he is a sorry spectacle. His only extra clothing is stuffed into the pockets of his shabby suit. He is hungry, too, and knows nowhere to go, for it is Sunday morning and all places of employment are closed. Now comes

the famous scene in which, having purchased three puffy rolls for a penny, he walks down the street with one under each arm while he eats the third. He passes the house of a Mr. Read, whose daughter Deborah, standing in the doorway is highly amused at this strange young man. He is not exactly the answer to the maiden's prayer for her future husband. Passing on down the street, his hunger satisfied by the one large roll, he gives the other two to a needy woman with a child and then follows a crowd of neatly dressed people. They turn their steps into a Quaker Meeting House. Benjamin turns with them, finds a seat and, during the Quakers' customary silence, falls fast asleep. After an hour or so someone gently wakes him and tells him the meeting is over. Thus ends the first morning in the city that is to be his home for the rest of his life.

After a night in cheap lodgings, early next morning he is at the printing office where he hopes to find work. But the vacancy has been filled. However, the proprietor kindly allows him to sleep in the building and introduces him to a Jewish printer, Samuel Keimer, a man with an unkempt beard, a chaotic shop, and a gluttonous appetite. Here at last Benjamin finds work, and here he begins his new career. Keimer, though something of a scholar, knows nothing of presswork. So it is arranged that Franklin shall have charge of the press, which he promptly proceeds to improve. Some months pass, business grows, and the young printer makes new friends. He also moves his lodging from Bradford's

shop to the home of Mr. Read, father of Deborah, whom he soon begins to court.

Shortly an incident occurs which adds an important contribution to his mounting fund of experience. Robert Holmes, his brother-in-law and master of a ship that plies between Boston and Delaware, happening to be in the neighborhood of Philadelphia, learns that Benjamin is now working there. He writes him a letter urging him to come back to Boston where his father and all the Franklins are anxious about him, having had no word from him in all these months. To that kindly letter Benjamin replies at some length, relating his reasons for leaving Boston. His letter is so persuasively written and so felicitously expressed that Holmes shows it to Sir William Keith, governor of the Province of Pennsylvania. Now Sir William is an expansive individual much given to promises, like many another politician before his time and since. He is so taken with Benjamin's letter and his evident power of putting words together effectively that he wants to see the young man. Philadelphia needs a really good printer; if this youngster is encouraged, he may some day be running a newspaper, and newspapers are desirable allies for governors. So he arranges a meeting with Benjamin, holds before him a bright prospect of owning his own shop, and writes a letter to Josiah Franklin, urging him to advance five hundred dollars capital to his son for the enterprise.

Benjamin goes back to Boston with the letter. His

father receives him gladly but after due consideration rejects the governor's suggestion; Benjamin is too young yet for such a responsibility, but if he will wait until he is twenty-one, the help will be forthcoming. The governor, on hearing this, being in one of his expansive and promising moods, says, "Since he will not set you up, I will do it myself." Thereupon he asks Benjamin to make an inventory of the equipment he will need, take ship to England, and there purchase the things himself. "And while there," he adds, "you may make acquaintances and establish correspondences in the bookselling and stationery way."

All this raises the youth's hopes to the highest pitch. He prepares the inventory, resigns his job with Keimer, "interchanges some promises" with Deborah, draws his savings from the bank, and purchases his passage to England on the boat suggested by the governor. Frequently, as the day for sailing approaches, he calls upon the governor to receive the letters of introduction and the money promised. Each time the governor is "too busy just now"; he will send them later. At last Benjamin boards the ship, still trusting the latest promise —that the governor is sending the letters and money by the same vessel. The ship sails, its mail is eventually opened, and there is nothing for Benjamin. Arriving in England nearly three months later, he learns that Sir William has a reputation of being a complete rascal and liar extraordinary.

What to do? In this predicament Franklin turns for

advice to a Quaker he has met on board, a Mr. Denham, a merchant from Philadelphia. Shall he take his remaining savings—about fifty dollars, just enough for the return voyage—and go back on the next ship? "No," advises Mr. Denham, "now that you are here, you had better secure employment. Among the printers here you will improve yourself; and when you return to America, you will be able to set up to greater advantage." So the disillusioned youth stays.

He has a rough time of it at first and lives from hand to mouth. But he secures employment at Palmer's Printing House and later at Watts'. He is known among the printers as the "Water American" from the fact that he drinks only water while they are accustomed to drink six pints of beer each day. Their theory is that "strong beer makes strong men." They laugh at him; but when they discover that he can carry a heavy form of type in each hand while they require two hands for a single form, they begin to see that there may be something in his theory that there is "more nourishment in a pennyworth of bread than in a quart of beer." He makes friends easily and attracts men of ambition and energy. He writes a number of articles, including a little semi-philosophical pamphlet (afterward regretted) entitled "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain." A surgeon of standing reads it and invites him to join a circle of young literary men and artists. Meanwhile, he continues to add to his knowledge of printing and studies

the processes of making type and of engraving—skills as yet unknown in America. Finally, when his dexterity in swimming is noised about, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer sends for him and asks him to take his two sons under his tutelage. He is considering this offer and remaining in England to establish a swimming school, which promises to be very profitable, when his Quaker friend Denham [2] offers him an opportunity to return to Philadelphia as an assistant in his store. Had Franklin stayed, the whole history of the American colonies might has taken a different course.

His homeward voyage—eighty-two days in a tiny sailing vessel whose passengers and crew number only twenty-one—might easily provide scenes enough for an exciting motion picture. But we have no space here for their adventures and vicissitudes. They bear out Dr. Johnson's remark that "a ship in these days is worse than a jail: there is in jail better air, better company, better conveniences of every kind, and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger." Our attention must be concentrated on this twenty-year-old printer and budding business man. He keeps a detailed journal of the voyage and in it records his observations

[2] The caliber of this man Denham may be judged from this act: on arrival in England he had searched out the addresses of his creditors who had suffered losses when, as a merchant in Bristol several years earlier, he had been forced into bankruptcy. Now, after a fresh start in America and subsequent success, he had returned to find his old creditors. He brought them together at a dinner where each man found beneath his plate a check including both principal and interest.

of the passengers and crew, the weather, the water, the flying fish, the sharks, the seaweed, the eclipses, and whatever other natural phenomena come within range of his observant eyes. Some of his descriptions remind one of those made by Charles Darwin on the famous voyage of the "Beagle."

Having observed everything about him, he turns his thoughts upon himself. He is returning with increased skill in his trade, with greater knowledge of books and of the world, with a host of new friends, some of them distinguished men—but this is not all. On the liability side of his ledger he realizes that he owes some money to a friend who has helped him in England, that he has been unfaithful to Deborah in the long absence, and that he has until now made no plan for his life other than to get on and prosper. This, he knows, is not enough. So he works out a plan for his own development. In it he sets forth these aims, among others: to live frugally until his debt is paid; to apply himself industriously to his new business and "not divert my mind from my business by any foolish project of growing suddenly rich, for industry and patience are the surest means of plenty"; to be sincere in every word and action; to speak ill of no man. In a few years he is to expand these aims into a unique project in moral self-discipline, as we shall see.

Back in Philadelphia at long last, he finds his troubles are not over. Deborah Read, long neglected, has yielded to pressure from her mother and married a potter

who has turned out to be a worthless character and deserted her. Mr. Denham, who takes Benjamin into his home and into his business and, seeing him so diligent, intends an early promotion for him, suddenly dies. The business is liquidated by the executors, leaving the young man out of employment. In vain he searches for work with other merchants. Keimer in the meantime has apparently prospered and now offers to take him back, secretly planning to discharge him after taking advantage of the new printing skills Benjamin has learned while in England. Franklin accepts, teaches Keimer's apprentices, contributes his own new knowledge of engraving, type-molding, and ink-making, and then, Keimer growing intolerably offensive, walks out after a bitter quarrel. At the request of his fellow workmen, who have as high a regard for him as they have a low one for Keimer, he returns long enough to carry through to success a new and difficult job of engraving paper money for the government of New Jersery. To accomplish it he builds the first copperplate press in America. In the course of this job he makes friends with several officials of that province, some sagacious men among them, who afterward become very helpful to him.

This job done, he again withdraws from Keimer's employment and now for the first time sets up in business for himself. With the help of a friend, Meredith, whose father supplies most of the capital, he founds the firm of Franklin and Meredith in a building on

Market Street. They pay a hundred dollars a year rental for the building and re-let most of it to a glazier in return for their board. They secure their printing machinery from England, hang out their sign, and hope for customers. They do not have to wait long. Their doors are scarcely opened when one of Franklin's numerous friends—a man named House—coming upon a countryman in need of having a small printing job done steers the man to the new shop. The young partners welcome him with open arms, for they have expended all their cash on their equipment. The job amounts to only five shillings, but, says Franklin, "those five shillings coming so seasonably gave me more pleasure than any crown I have since earned, and the gratitude I felt toward House has made me often more ready than perhaps I should otherwise have been to assist young beginners."

The Junto. A few months before this Franklin has organized a secret debating society known as the Junto. Its membership is limited to twelve picked friends, and its purpose is mutual improvement. Each member in turn is required to produce one or more queries on any point of morals, politics, or natural philosophy to be discussed by the society. The debates "were to be conducted in the sincere spirit of inquiry after truth, without fondness for dispute or desire of victory." In spite of the secrecy which they have hoped to maintain (in order to keep out undesirable members), the success of their debates is soon so talked

about that they are besieged by applicants who want to join. Whereupon Franklin suggests that each of the original members organize, if he wishes to do so, a separate club upon the same lines. Several do. The original club continues its existence for nearly forty years, discussing each week social and scientific and moral issues of the day. Out of it, at length, grows the American Philosophical Society.

His Business Grows. Although Franklin had no selfish motive when he founded the Junto, now, in the first year of his new business, he has an unlooked-for reward. Its members, knowing the quality of his mind and confident in his integrity, bring their business to his shop and encourage their friends to do likewise. Early and late the young partners work, although the burden of it falls mostly on Franklin, since Meredith is seldom sober. Merchants, leaving their own stores long after their employees have gone home for the day, pass the new print shop and see activity still going on there. They bring their patronage. The officials of the city and colony, discovering that Franklin and Meredith have better type and do more accurate and more attractive work than other printers, begin to place with them the public printing. And so the young business begins to thrive. We shall not relate here its difficulties or its financial crises—they are the common lot of all such enterprises. Ultimately Meredith, still addicted to liquor and more attracted by a farm in North Carolina, drops out; and Franklin buys his in-

terest and becomes sole proprietor. He also buys a small newspaper,[3] opens a stationery shop, slowly manages to pay off his debts, and continues to write articles that keep people talking about his ideas.

Shaping His Own Philosophy of Life. Those ideas concern us here, for we are primarily seeking the factors in his life which account in some measure for his power. According to his own judgment in his seventy-ninth year, he owed the constant felicity of his long life to the philosophy and the system of ethical discipline that he worked out when he was in his early twenties. As we have seen, he did some thinking along these lines on the homeward voyage from England. He now carries his thought further. Although he was raised in a Puritan home, he has counted himself for several years a freethinker. He has been free in morals, too, and an illegitimate son has been the result. He has persuaded some of his friends to his ideas. But his observations of the fruits of this so-called freethinking make him think again. His closest friends, Collins and Ralph, have both counted themselves freethinkers, and both have gone sadly astray. Governor Keith is a freethinker and the greatest long-distance liar in the province. And looking upon his own life, he finds much in it, especially in the suffering he has caused Deborah Read and the self-centeredness of his

[3] Although it had only nine subscribers, it had an ambitious, though horrendous, name: *Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences, and Pennsylvania Gazette.* Franklin dropped the first eight words from its title.

ambitions, to give him pause. He comes to the conclusion that negations of orthodox beliefs, however well grounded, are hardly sufficient to live by. He must stake his life on something positive.

Accordingly, he works out his own statement of "First Principles." He records them in a little handwritten book which he entitles *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion.* The book consists of a creed, an invocation, a litany, Milton's "Hymn to the Creator," and a closing prayer. The essence of his creed is:

That there is one God, who made all things;
That He governs the world by His providence;
That He ought to be worshiped by adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving;
But that the most acceptable service to God is doing good to man;
That the soul is immortal;
And that God will certainly reward virtue and punish vice, either here or hereafter.

The concluding prayer is one of thanksgiving for peace and liberty; for food and raiment; for corn and wine and milk, and every kind of helpful nourishment; for the common benefits of air and light; for useful fire and delicious water; for knowledge and literature and every useful art; for friends and their prosperity; for the fewness of his own enemies; for life and reason and

the use of speech; for health and joy, and every pleasant hour.[4]

Not content with this liturgy, sometime later he works out a method by which he endeavors to attain perfection in his own life. He says,

I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection . . . . As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employed in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason. I concluded, at length, that the mere speculative conviction that it was our interest to be completely virtuous was not sufficient to prevent our slipping; and that the contrary habits must be broken, and good ones acquired and established, before we can have any dependence on a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct.

For this purpose he contrives a characteristic method. He selects thirteen virtues which seem to him necessary or desirable, appending to each a precept as follows:

1. TEMPERANCE. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

[4] For a lengthier account of this and his other religious views, see J. M. Stifler, *The Religion of Benjamin Franklin,* D. Appleton and Company, 1925.

2. SILENCE. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
3. ORDER. Let all things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
4. RESOLUTION. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
5. FRUGALITY. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.
6. INDUSTRY. Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.
7. SINCERITY. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
8. JUSTICE. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
9. MODERATION. Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. CLEANLINESS. Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, clothes, or habitation.
11. TRANQUILLITY. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
12. CHASITY. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
13. HUMILITY. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

At first he had selected only twelve virtues for his list, but

A Quaker friend having kindly informed me that I was generally thought proud; that my pride showed

itself frequently in conversation; that I was not content with being in the right when discussing any point, but was overbearing and rather insolent, of which he convinced me by mentioning several instances; I determined endeavoring to cure myself, if I could, of this vice or folly among the rest, and I added Humility to my list, giving an extensive meaning to the word.

His intention being to acquire the habit of these virtues, he realizes that it would not be well to attempt the whole lot at once and decides to attempt to master one at a time. He makes a little book in which he allots one page to each virtue. He so rules the pages that there is space for marking his progress day by day. Every fall from grace he records with a black spot. He gives a week's strict attention to each virtue in turn, marking conscientiously his slips. There being thirteen virtues and fifty-two weeks, he thus is able to go through the whole list four times each year. He is surprised to find himself much fuller of faults than he had supposed and now and then is tempted to give up the whole project and content himself with a few faults among his virtues "to keep his friends in countenance." But he persists and makes a daily habit of the exercise as a part of his regimen.

This regimen consists of rising each morning at five, addressing a prayer to "Powerful Goodness," [5] going

[5] The prayer: "O Powerful Goodness, Bountiful Father, Merciful Guide! Increase in me that wisdom which discovers my truest interest. Strengthen my resolutions to perform what that wisdom dictates. Accept my kind offices to thy other children as the only return in my power for thy continual favors to me."

through his home-made liturgy, making a resolution to do some specific good during the day, planning the whole day's work, breakfasting at seven, working until twelve, lunching and reading and overlooking his accounts until two, working again until six, supping at seven, and devoting the evening to music or diversion or conversation. Before retiring at ten he examines his conduct for the day and posts in his little book whatever black marks are due. For nearly twenty years he follows this daily schedule. The fruits of it he harvests for more than sixty years.

About the time he is inaugurating this self-discipline he marries Deborah Read (1730) whose husband in the meantime has died. She proves a thrifty and affectionate, although uneducated, wife. She helps him in his office, too, and mothers his illegitimate son as well as her own children.

The foundations of his life are laid, the bent of his mind determined, his home and habits established. We make no apology for having devoted the bulk of our limited space to these basic factors. What follows is superstructure; and even though it is one of the most imposing superstructures in American history, we must describe it only in broad outline. His labors and achievements can be subsumed under four heads: as printer and business man, as citizen of Philadelphia, as scientist, and as statesman.

Franklin as Printer and Business Man. His *Pennsylvania Gazette* prospers and in a few years becomes

the best newspaper in America. Hitherto most newspapers have been dull reading, filled as they are with sermons and discussions of religion, and all poorly printed. Franklin fills the *Gazette* with real news (although meager by modern standards) and with humorous and sprightly articles—and prints it attractively. No less an innovation is his addition of advertising. Other papers have carried a few notices of runaway servants and sales of lands and household goods. Franklin enlarges his own office to a small salesroom, carrying a variety of articles, from liver pills to fish nets and books, and then advertises these humorously in the *Gazette*. Merchants, seeing how such advertisements build up Franklin's sales, begins to insert their own until some issues carry four or five pages of them —all very profitable.

The Pennsylvania colony has a great many Germans. To reach them Franklin publishes the first foreign language paper in this country: *The Philadelphia Zeitung*—and of course every German wants it.

Next comes the famous venture of *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Every printer publishes an almanac, but they are all matter-of-fact and pretty stodgy affairs. People buy them because they provide the only calendars available, give the phases of the moon, the time of the eclipses, etc. Franklin sees that their wide use makes them a possible "vehicle for conveying instruction among the common people, who bought scarcely any other books." So when he issues his, he inserts into its

otherwise blank spaces numerous adages and bits of humor and homely common sense. Examples: "Diligence is the mother of good luck," "Wealth is not his that has it, but his that enjoys it," "It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright," "Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee," "Deny self for self's sake," "The proof of gold is fire; the proof of a woman, gold; the proof of man, a woman," "Fish and visitors smell in three days," "Who hath deceived thee so oft as thyself?" "Drink water, put the money in your pocket, and leave the dry bellyache in the punchbowl." The result of the almanac: instant success. Three editions sell out in the first month. For twenty-five years Franklin edits it, and its circulation never falls below ten thousand copies. No less than seventy-five editions of a compilation of its succinct wisdom have been printed in English, and it has been translated into nearly every language of the civilized world.

With the profits from his first almanac Franklin branches out. Many villages and towns have sprung up which have no print shops. Into one of these he sends a printer he has trained. Franklin supplies the capital; the man sets up a shop and pays Franklin one-third of the profit. The project succeeds so well that he repeats it in other towns. Thus the Franklin fortune grows until, at the age of forty-two, he is a comparatively rich man and able to retire.

Franklin as Citizen of Philadelphia. In the twenty-eight years of his residence in Philadelphia, before his

country calls him to serve it abroad, there is hardly a public reform with which he is not identified, usually as instigator. And this is the manner of their starting: he works out a paper describing the need for the reform and his plan for meeting it; he reads that paper to the Junto where its members discuss it; they refer it for similar discussion to their corresponding clubs; then, when he has received the criticisms and suggestions of these colleagues, he prints the revised paper in the *Gazette,* and the public debate begins. He publishes articles pro and con about the plan until action is taken.

After some such process he helps to establish the first public circulating library in the city, and probably the first in the world. The room of the Junto is its first headquarters. Franklin raises the necessary subscriptions for the purchase of the books—and it is a most difficult undertaking with few who believe it will work. But it does work, and so well the first year that larger quarters must be obtained. Today it survives as The Library Company of Philadelphia—said to be the largest and best library in that city.

After the library, the police force, and after it, the fire company, the first of its kind. A queer, almost comical, affair—that fire company. Each member is required "to keep always in good order and fit for use a certain number of leather buckets with strong bags and baskets (for packing and transporting of goods) which were to be brought to every fire." But it saves many a home and becomes the grandfather of scores

of other such companies throughout the country and the great-grandfather of our modern fire-fighting organizations. After the fire company, Franklin stirs up his fellow citizens to the need of self-defense in case of war—and a regiment of home guards is eventually enlisted.

Next, under this head, comes the founding of the Philadelphia Academy. The city has had no school of any consequence; the population is growing. Although Franklin has been largely self-taught (and about this time he adds Latin and Italian in his noon hours), he believes that the young people of the city will progress more satisfactorily if a good school is available for them. So by the Junto-and-*Gazette*-and-public-discussion process he endeavors to start one. His first attempt fails—the public is too preoccupied with the war going on between England and France and Spain—a war which might involve them as British subjects. But when the war scare dies down he writes a pamphlet entitled "Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania" and sends a copy to every subscriber to his *Gazette*. He then opens a subscription for the building of the school, raises some twenty-five thousand dollars for it, and in the course of a year sees it opened and ready for students. They come in such numbers that its quarters are soon enlarged. Thirty years later it becomes the University of Pennsylvania, and Franklin is one of its trustees.

Another city project in which he takes a vital interest

is the inauguration of its first hospital—and the first one in America. His friend Dr. Thomas Bond has begun the work; but Franklin throws into it his own abundant energy and the support of his newspapers, and the doctor's dream becomes a reality.

Franklin as Scientist. Science is his hobby. A born experimenter and a self-trained observer, he makes studies of the phenomena of light, heat, fire, air, stars, sunspots, tides, winds, rainfall, waterspouts, ventilation, and sound as thrilling diversions from his more mundane occupations. Of these studies we shall mention here only those for which he becomes most widely known: his invention of the Franklin stove and his experiments with electricity.

At one of the meetings of the Junto someone raises this question: How may smoky chimneys best be cured? The question intrigues Franklin, and he goes to work upon it. Some months later he brings forth his stove as an answer. It is a stove placed inside the fireplace, its front projecting slightly into the room. Its principle is simple enough: the heat rising from the fire is made to come down through the stove before going out through the chimney, thus warming the currents of air in the room. The result: the whole room "is equally warm, so that people need not crowd so close around the fire, but may sit near the window, and have the benefit of the light for reading, writing, needlework, etc." Before Franklin invents this stove, the only method of heating houses or hotels has been by open

fireplaces at which one's shins are toasted while one's back is chilled. There are no furnaces and no heating stoves. In a few years Franklin stoves are installed everywhere in this country and in England. Franklin refuses to patent the device, preferring to make it a contribution to the public.

He begins his electrical studies at the age of forty shortly after he sees one of the new Leyden jars. He is fascinated by the invention. He and three of his friends start some experiments of their own with the thick glass rods which, when rubbed briskly with cloth, generate the electricity with which the Leyden jars can be charged. After much work in their home laboratories they produce the first electrical battery. It is composed of eleven panes of window glass enclosed between plates of lead and supported by a silk cord with wires and chains connecting.

Franklin goes on to make deeper studies into the nature of this strange new phenomenon. He comes to the conclusion that it is "really an element diffused among, and attracted by, other matter, particularly by water and metals"; that it is collected, not created, by friction; that it exists in what he calls a "plus" and a "minus" state; and that the "plus" will seek to go toward the "minus" to equalize it just as high water seeks lower. This attempt of the "plus" to reach the "minus" creates the spark.

When he reaches this point, he is so thoroughly absorbed that he plans to retire from business and devote

all his time to further study of the subject. To this end he elevates his foreman at the printing shop to a partnership and relieves himself from active duty there. "But," he writes, "the public, now considering me as a man of leisure, laid hold of me for their purposes." They elect him justice of the peace, clerk of the city council, and later a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly. These duties take the bulk of his time, and he has only the fringes of the day left for his investigations. But he still finds some hours each week for them.

The next product of these precious hours is the lightning rod. Even before he perfects it, he publishes (in 1750) a little pamphlet containing a description of his experiments and observations and sends a copy of it to his old friend Peter Collinson in London. Collinson, recognizing its importance, prints an English edition and presents a copy to the Royal Society, where it excites much discussion. A copy of it comes into the hands of a noted French scientist, the Count de Buffon, who translates it into French. This French translation has an enormous sale so that Franklin's name becomes as well known in France as in America. King Louis XV orders some of the experiments performed in his presence. Meanwhile, Count de Buffon and some associates work out other experiments suggested by Franklin's pamphlet and prove beyond doubt the correctness of his theory that electricity and lightning are one and the same. When the Count announces this to

the Royal Society, the august body elects Franklin a member and votes him a medal.

Franklin, knowing nothing of these European consequences of his little pamphlet—so slow are the mails—continues his experiments, the most important being the famous one of the kite and key in the thunderstorm—too well known to need repeating here.

Mr. Nathan G. Goodman has published a book entitled *The Ingenious Dr. Franklin,* devoted to his scientific letters. They are amazing in their scope and in their clear and concise description of his observations and deductions. A few of their titles will illustrate the broad sweep of his scientific interest: Cause of Colds, Springs, Tides and Rivers, Salt and Salt Water, Origin of Northeast Storms, Effect of Oil on Water, Spouts and Whirlwinds, Sunspots, Conductors and Non-Conductors, Magnetism and the Theory of the Earth, Sound, Pre-historic Animals of Ohio, Toads Found in Stone, Character of Clouds, Locating the Gulf Stream, Smallpox and Cancer, Prophesy on Aerial Navigation, Electrical Treatment for Paralysis, Bifocals, Lead Poisoning.

What further contributions to science Franklin might have made we shall never know, for his fellow citizens now reach out and claim his energies to aid them in their desperate political struggle.

Franklin as Statesman. Neither Franklin nor his fellow citizens think of him as a statesman during the first few years after he retires from business at the age

of forty-two. They see him simply as an unusually wise and capable neighbor who might be pressed into service as a general trouble-shooter. And the troubles of the Pennsylvania colony have multiplied on every side. Most of them have grown out of the absentee-landlordism of the colony's proprietors—Thomas and Richard Penn—reactionary sons of the great William Penn, the founder. They live in England but own huge estates in Pennsylvania and appoint a governor to represent them in the colony. No act passed by the Pennsylvania Assembly can become a law until approved by this governor. When the Assembly taxes the colonists to raise money for defense against Indian invasions and for the general expense of government, the Penns refuse to allow their lands to be taxed; and the people naturally decline to pay unless the Penns bear their proportionate share. Endless disputes follow. Franklin, elected to the Assembly, endeavors to persuade the Penns' governor to accept their share of the common burden—and fails. But the long months of argument and negotiation school him in the colonists' troubles and deepen his sympathy for them. Further, they plant in his mind the germ of conviction that young America cannot develop under the domination of an Old World government that seems concerned only with the revenues that can be extracted from the American colonies.

The affairs of the Pennsylvania colony in stalemate, Franklin accepts the appointment of Postmaster General of America. As he takes up his duties, only a few

large cities along the coast have post offices. Mail is carried on horseback. There is only one mail a week between New York and Pennsylvania, and it takes six weeks for mail to make the round trip between Philadelphia and Boston. Here is a task that appeals to his ingenuity. He straightens the post roads, increases the number and speed of the mails, reduces the rates of letter postage, and makes the postal service not only pay for itself, but for the first time yield a small revenue to the government.

In the midst of this work the Pennsylvania Assembly asks him to help it create plans for defense against the threatened uprising of the French and Indians. Representing Pennsylvania, Franklin works out a plan for the union of all the colonies—but the time is not yet ripe for such a scheme. Not only does England frown upon it, but some of the other colonies fear they might lose more than they would gain by the proposed union. So the plan comes to naught; yet twenty years later the colonies adopt a plan of federation quite similar to this suggested by Franklin.

In the French and Indian War his chief task is to furnish—in spite of an empty colonial treasury—transportation facilities and supplies for General Braddock. In less than a month Franklin manages to muster 150 wagons, 259 pack-horses, and large quantities of oats and hay. While on this undertaking he becomes acquainted with a young officer on Braddock's staff, George Washington.

To the surprise of everyone Braddock's expedition meets with disastrous defeat by the Indians, who from the western frontiers now begin to press their advantage. By a series of forays they advance toward Philadelphia. By the end of six months they have captured and burned several white settlements and are within seventy miles of the city. On the verge of panic, the governor asks Franklin to captain a force of five hundred men who will act as the city's first line of defense. Franklin accepts and after much difficulty establishes stockades and forts at strategic points along the frontier some fifty miles from Philadelphia.

Meanwhile, the Assembly's quarrel with the Penns and their governor comes to a new crisis. The Penns finally agree to contribute $25,000 toward the defense of the colony provided their estates are not taxed. The Assembly reluctantly accepts this compromise, and the colonists vote to tax themselves $300,000 for the same cause. But the Penns do not send their money. Instead, they announce through their governor that the Assembly must collect the $25,000 out of the unpaid rentals of the tenants on the Penns' estates.

Infuriated, the Assembly calls Franklin from the frontier and, after much discussion, commissions him and his son to go to England to lay the cause of the colonists before the Penns and before the English people.

The next five years—1757 to 1762—Franklin spends in England as the representative of the Pennsylvania

colony. We shall not follow him in the arduous details of his negotiations. Thomas and Richard Penn listen to him in silence. They promise "to look into the matter." They delay a whole year and then give their answer: a blunt *no* to every request the colonists have made. Franklin takes his cause to the English public through a series of newspaper articles and conferences with political leaders. After numerous defeats he wins a complete, although temporary, victory over the Penns, who are required by the English government to allow their estates under certain conditions to be taxed by the colonists.

During the interval while waiting for committees to hear him, Franklin writes much, his most notable piece being a pamphlet (with Richard Jackson, agent for the Massachusetts colony, as co-author) entitled *The Interest of Great Britain Considered with Regard to Her Colonies.* In this he argues that Great Britain would do well to retain Canada instead of ceding it to the French; for if it were French, it would be a constant menace to the peace of the English in America. This pamphlet has much weight in England's final decision to retain Canada. He also carries on his scientific experiments in heat, sound, and electricity, setting up a laboratory in his lodgings for the purpose, and inviting leading English scientists to observe and work with him. He finds the scientists far more co-operative than the politicians. He makes many important friends, including Hume, Robertson, and Adam Smith. Both

St. Andrews and Oxford Universities award him Doctor's degrees in recognition of his contributions to science and natural philosophy.[6] He is the first American to be so honored. In other odd moments he invents a musical instrument, the armonica, constructed of several half-spheres of glass tuned to the notes of a piano, and played by rubbing moistened fingers over the revolving edges. He also acquires some skill in playing the guitar, the harp, and the violin.

Returning to America at the end of 1762—his wife having died in his absence—Franklin plans to spend the rest of his days quietly pursuing his experiments in electricity and physics. But again the colony drafts him. In December, 1763, occurs the Paxton Massacre —the slaughter and burning of an entire village of Indians by some hot-blooded young whites. Franklin writes a strong article against the outrage, but it has little effect. A few weeks later the same mob of white rowdies advances on Philadelphia, intent on killing some one hundred and sixty Christian Indians who have sought refuge there under the leadership of a Moravian missionary. Terror stricken, the governor appeals to Franklin to organize a defense of the city. Accepting the commission, he recruits a regiment of a thousand men, marshalls it ready for battle, then rides out of the city himself (accompanied by three other citizens) and negotiates with the white mob. He per-

[6] Harvard and Yale had both conferred upon him the M. A. degree in 1753, and William and Mary the same degree in 1756.

suades them that the city is so well defended that any raid will only bring disaster to the raiders. Besides, their purpose is unworthy of them. The mob finally disperses and goes home without bloodshed.

Within six months Franklin is back in England, again commissioned by the Pennsylvania Assembly to act as its agent in an effort to persuade the king "to resume the government" of the colony and to release it from the intolerable yoke of the Penns. In this Franklin fails. The bent of the English government is toward increasing, not diminishing, the burdens upon the colonies. It now introduces the famous Stamp Act by which it hopes to raise money from America to help pay the cost of England's war with France. Franklin exerts every effort to prevent the passage of this act, which he calls "the mother of mischief." He fails again; Parliament passes the act. Back in Pennsylvania the enraged colonists, not realizing the odds against which he has fought in England, condemn him as a turncoat and even a traitor. His family barely escapes being mobbed. Knowing nothing of this and refusing to accept his defeat, he continues to labor against the act, secures a hearing before the House of Commons, and, after a dramatic conflict, wins a repeal of the act. When the news reaches America, he is restored to the esteem and confidence of his countrymen.

But his victory is short-lived. The king's party soon passes other bills, including the Townshend Acts, im-

posing duties on tea, glass, paper, paints, and other imports by America. The colonists, goaded beyond endurance, raise the cry, "No taxation without representation!" and dump an English cargo of tea in the Boston harbor. They riot in the principal cities of America. They boycott all the articles subject to the new tax. In London Franklin speaks for them in no uncertain terms. "I have some little property in America," he declares. "I will freely spend nineteen shillings in the pound to defend my right of giving or refusing the other shilling. . . ." Georgia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts ask him to serve as their agent as well as Pennsylvania's. He accepts and does his utmost with voice and pen to reconcile the British and American points of view. He wins the support of the liberals in England, but they are in the minority. The tories in both countries oppose him. The king and his party, deaf to the distant rumblings of revolution, brush aside all pleadings and protests. They attempt to gain Franklin's support by offers of political position in England. Failing in this, they begin to look for ways to discredit him. The king's Secretary of State for the Colonies refuses to recognize his credentials for the Colony of Massachusetts. The Solicitor General publicly insults him, accusing him of stealing important communications (the famous Hutchinson letters) from the tory governor of that colony. Finally, Franklin is dismissed by the English government

from the office of Postmaster General of the American Colonies.

Convinced that his usefulness in England is at an end, he returns to America in 1775. As he arrives, he hears of the battles of Lexington and Concord. Without hesitation he throws himself wholeheartedly into the revolution. Elected immediately to the Continental Congress as one of the Pennsylvania delegates, he serves on as many as ten committees. He is one of the five members appointed to draw up the Declaration of Independence and counsels with young Thomas Jefferson, who actually drafts the document. By letters to his wide circle of friends in England, Ireland, and France, he endeavors to enlist their fealty to the cause of American independence. As Washington takes command of the colonial armies, Franklin is again commissioned to go abroad, this time to France, to enlist its moral and financial support. Before he sails, he raises all the ready money he can collect from his own properties—some $15,000 to $20,000—and lends it to the Continental Congress. The concluding clause of the Declaration of Independence—"we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour"—is more than rhetoric for him; and he knows that he speaks the literal truth when, after signing that document, he declares, "And now we must all hang together, or we shall all hang separately."

Franklin's labors in France beggar all description. Probably no American ambassador has ever undertaken

a heavier load nor carried it through more successfully. He is seventy years old when appointed in 1776. "I am but a fag end, and you may have me for what you please," he tells the Continental Congress. Yet the fag end of Franklin is more powerful than the whole of any other man in the colonies. Even before he arrives in Paris on his portentous mission, he is one of the most talked about men in Europe. John Adams, who later joins him and who frequently displays an irascible jealousy toward him, wrote accurately when he said: "His reputation was more universal than that of Leibnitz or Newton, Frederick or Voltaire, and his character more beloved and esteemed than any or all of them. . . . . His name was familiar to government and people . . . . to such a degree that there was scarcely a peasant or a citizen, a *valet de chambre,* coachman or footman, a lady's chambermaid or a scullion in a kitchen who was not familiar with it, and who did not consider him as a friend to human kind."

His popularity extends to the learned as well as to the masses. His scientific works have run through three editions in Paris. He is one of eight foreign members of the Royal Academy of Science of that city and a member also of practically every important scientific body in Europe. In addition to his personal prestige, he brings a cause which finds a welcome in French hearts —the cause of a bold young nation proclaiming its "natural right" for freedom, especially freedom from Great Britain, France's erstwhile enemy.

But the popularity of Franklin and his mission render his task no less desperate. France is now technically at peace with Great Britain, and the French government cannot officially recognize him. The colonies are weak; England is mighty. The colonies have no financial credit; England's resources are almost unlimited. If France should give aid and comfort to America, it might start another continental war. Moreover, many of the loans French merchants have made to the colonies, in expectation of receiving cargoes of American products in return, have not been repaid. Every vessel from the west brings to Franklin new drafts upon the funds he has not yet procured. The European mails bring him other drafts from American agents in other cities. Finally, the French government itself is practically bankrupt.

Franklin's attack upon these formidable obstacles makes one of the most exciting and brilliant stories in the pages of American diplomacy. He presents his cause to every sort of gathering, popular and learned. He writes scores of articles for the newspapers—articles so pungent and humorous and so filled with homely philosophy that they are as eagerly read and quoted as those of any American columnist today. He cultivates his personal friendships with statesmen and philosophers and scientists. And he keeps patiently at it month after month for six years. In spite of innumerable temporary defeats he achieves in that time (1) a treaty of alliance and a treaty of amity and com-

merce between the United States and France; (2) an arrangement for the exchange of English and American prisoners; (3) with the help of young Lafayette, French troops sent to aid Washington; and (4) gifts and loans from the French government to America totaling nearly sixty million dollars. Had it not been for this French support the heroic struggles of Washington's armies in America might have had a different outcome.

He is seventy-five years old. Feeling the infirmities of age creeping upon him—especially the ravages of gout—he petitions the American Congress to allow him to return. But the Congress has one more task for him. It asks him to be one of the commissioners to conclude the treaty of peace with Great Britain. The negotiations require more than a year and a half, during which the minds of Franklin, John Adams, John Jay, and Henry Laurence are pitted against the most skilful diplomats of England, who seem bent on winning at the treaty table the war they have lost on the field. The Americans stand firm, however; and the treaty is eventually signed in Paris on September 3, 1783.

Even now Congress cannot allow Franklin to return. Will he not conclude trade treaties for America with other countries? So for nearly two years longer he stays on, bringing to successful conclusions treaties with every country except Denmark and Portugal. His last official act as ambassador is to sign the treaty between

the United States and Prussia in 1785. During these years he is probably the most famous man on the whole European continent, and his home in Paris receives a continuous stream of illustrious men and women—statesmen, writers, artists, philosophers, and scientists. Thomas Jefferson, the next ambassador, could well say, "I *succeed* him; no one can *replace* him."

So, in his eightieth year, Franklin takes his departure from France, confident that he can spend his remaining days in peaceful retirement. On the homeward voyage he writes three scientific essays, in one of which he suggests a revolutionary change in marine construction based upon his earlier observations of Chinese methods: a series of water-tight compartments in the hold of the vessel "so that if a leak should spring in one of them, the others are not affected by it; and though that chamber should fill to a level of the sea, it would not be sufficient to sink the vessel." Today all sea vessels embody this principle.

A vast multitude acclaims him on his arrival at the Market Street wharf of Philadelphia, the same spot on which sixty-two years earlier he landed, a hungry, lonely, and bedraggled boy in search of a job.

But his public service is not yet ended. Within a month, against his protest, he is elected governor of Pennsylvania; then re-elected without opposition, except his own, in 1786, and again in 1787. His entire salary as governor he donates to the founding of a college for Germans at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. To keep

his mind from growing rusty in these years he continues his scientific work, inventing a machine for ironing clothes (the mangle), a combination chair and stepladder, a device for taking books from high shelves in a library without the necessity of climbing up for them, a new kind of bathtub, and various minor gadgets.

His last work is as a member of the convention to draw up the Constitution for the United States. After heated debates the meetings of this body come to a deadlock over the question of the representation of the smaller states who fear that they will always be outvoted by the larger ones. Franklin resolves the issue by suggesting that each state should have the same number of representatives in the Senate, but in the House the number should be determined by the state's population. He strongly urges that the President of the United States be elected for a term of seven years and not be eligible for re-election. But in this he is defeated.

At last in 1788, in his eighty-third year, he is permitted to retire. Serenely he spends his last months. "Let us sit till the evening of life is spent," he writes to a friend; "the last hours are always the most joyful. When we can stay no longer, it is time enough then to bid each other good-night, separate, and go quietly to bed." On April 17, 1790, surrounded by his family and intimate friends, very peacefully he passes away.

Sources of His Power. It would be easy enough to

point to Franklin's outstanding characteristics—his enormous energy, his eager inventiveness, his shrewd common sense, his business acumen, his patient tactfulness, his kindly humor, his flashing wit, and his literary forcefulness—and to say that these were the sources of his power. But they were not *sources;* they were *manifestations* of his power. Its real sources lay deeper. What was it that released that energy within him, that stimulated his mind to inventiveness, and his pen to persuasiveness?

Franklin's own answer probably comes as near as any. In his seventy-ninth year, when writing his autobiography, he declared that he "owed the constant felicity of his life" to the philosophy and the system of self-discipline he had worked out half a century earlier. We have seen how that philosophy evolved out of his Puritan heritage in the austere home of his youth, how he forsook it for a while and then reconstructed it in the light of his own experience, and how he thought it through to a simple statement of first principles. At the heart of that philosophy was his conviction that there is a God who created the universe and governs it, and that the "most acceptable service to God is doing good to man." To Franklin the laws of God and the laws of Nature are identical, and they rule the moral and spiritual world as well as the physical. Man's duty is to discover them and adjust his life to them. They are beneficent to those who co-operate

with them, destructive to those who oppose. Franklin co-operated. He was *at home* in the universe.

His philosophy alone would have meant little, had it not been for the self-discipline with which he applied it to his own life. By that discipline he educated himself, guided his natural curiosity and energy to the discovery of new principles of science and their application to practical inventions, learned to budget his time, taught himself new skills, trained his pen to express clearly and gracefully his thought, corrected his own wayward habits, restrained his passions, and nourished his virtues. By this combination of a simple, rugged philosophy and a rigorous self-discipline he achieved a character that won the confidence and affections of his countrymen and the respect of the world.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

1803-1882

"WHOEVER reads an American book?" jeered Sidney Smith in 1815. Fifty years later it would have been hard to find an intelligent European who was not reading American books, and chiefly Emerson's. In that half-century the new continent had flowered in him and in Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier, Whitman, and Lowell. Of these Emerson had come first. He had made his voice heard around the world. It was the voice of a seer who saw old things in a new light, the voice of a prophet who understood the genius of democracy and inspired men to a new faith in themselves. They called him successively "the sage of Concord," "the oracle of New England," and "the wisest American."

His life almost spanned the nineteenth century. In 1803, when he was born, the United States was but an infant nation still cutting its teeth. George Washington had died only four years earlier. The War of the Revolution was a vivid memory in the lives of men and

women still living. Thomas Jefferson was negotiating the Louisiana Purchase, the vast extent and riches of which not even that sagacious statesman knew. In his youth Emerson heard his elders discuss news of the War of 1812. His family felt the pinch of want that came with the blockade of Boston by British ships. As a young man he saw the covered wagons trek westward to settle new lands beyond the Alleghenies. Later he saw the railroads thrust their shining tentacles across the desolation of western deserts. As a mature man he saw the growing nation expand and amass incredible wealth and then rend itself in a bloody Civil War. Before he died, he saw it re-united and a world power.

Through all this activity, he felt the vital *energy* of a new generation, the light of freedom in its eyes—a generation striving to release itself from the political and economic and religious repressions of the Old World. That energy flowed through his own mind. It washed away old philosophies, old interpretations of human and divine relationships. It cut fresh channels of thought. "We have listened too long," he said, "to the courtly muses of Europe. . . . . We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds." But the pioneers who were expanding America could not speak their own minds; they were inarticulate. Emerson spoke for them.

Ancestors. By heredity, home, education, and early environment no man was better fitted for that function. He came from a long line of thinkers and speakers—

men who incarnated the spirit of young America. One of his ancestors, the Rev. Peter Bulkeley, an Anglican clergyman of fine family, learning, and non-conformist views, had left England in 1635 rather than be silenced by Archbishop Laud. He had come to New England, established himself on its wooded frontier, and preached with such power that he became known as "father, prophet, and counsellor," not only to his people but to the other ministers of the Massachusetts colony. His grandchildren carried on the tradition, sharing the hardships of the settlers and contributing their services at meager salaries as preachers and teachers. His great-grandson (the great-grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson) was Rev. Joseph Emerson, a graduate of Harvard in 1717, and one of the most diligent students in New England. He assembled a considerable library and saw to it that his children mastered its contents. Joseph's granddaughter, Mary Moody Emerson—of whom more later—described the process:

> The children sat upon a settle, with lessons or catechism, the biggest at one end, the next in size at the other, and the little one in the middle. For outdoor relaxation there was the farm work; but even that was grudged. . . . . They all believed in poverty, and would have nothing to do with uncle John of Topsfield, who had a grant of land, and was rich. My grandfather prayed every night that none of his descendants might ever be rich.[1]

[1] James Elliot Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1887, p. 9.

Another ancestor, Rev. Samuel Moody, used to flay the sins of his Maine parishioners with such vehemence that one or more of them would rise and start to leave the church, whereupon he would cry out, "Come back, you graceless sinner, come back!" When he learned that some of them were venturing into alehouses on Saturday nights, he went in after them, dragged them out by their collars, and sent them to their homes with admonitions that burned their ears.

Emerson's grandfather, Rev. William Emerson I, minister at Concord, fired the spirits of the minute men during the Revolution by his fervent preaching of the rights of the colonists to their liberty. From his own doorstep he witnessed the famous battle at Concord Bridge in 1775. His parishioners had difficulty restraining him from an active part in that fateful skirmish. Less than two years later he died of camp fever at Ticonderoga, where he had gone to serve as chaplain to the troops in whose cause he believed so wholeheartedly.

Emerson's Father. The flame of these ardent advocates of righteousness and liberty burned in Emerson's father, William Emerson II. A graduate of Harvard (1789), he entered the ministry at twenty-three. His first pastorate was of the Unitarian church in the village of Harvard at a salary of but $333.30 a year, a pittance that grew even smaller in purchasing power as the value of the currency of those times depreciated. Barely able to keep alive, he resolved that he must not

think of marriage. But in his diary of June, 1796, there is this entry: "Rode out with Miss R. H., and talked with her on the subject of matrimony." Four months later he married her—Ruth Haskins, daughter of a Boston merchant. They began their married life buoyantly in spite of their poverty. They lived on a small farm because they could do so more cheaply than in the village. They skimped on everything—except books. "We are poor and cold," he wrote, "and have little meal, and little wood, and little meat, but, thank God, courage enough." To make ends meet he sold his beloved bass viol, took in boarders, taught school, and worked with his hands on the farm. Three years of this they bore, until deliverance came in a call to the First Church of Boston.

In Boston he soon made a name for himself as a young preacher of advanced liberal views—"an honest man who expressed himself decidedly and emphatically, but never bluntly or vulgarly." Here, his poverty relaxed, he was able to devote his extra-ministerial activities to the literary and cultural pursuits he enjoyed. He stimulated the Massachusetts Historical Society to found a weekly paper, the *American Apollo,* devoted to discussions of the natural, political, and religious history of the country. He established the Philosophical Society of Boston and saw it grow to a flourishing maturity. He was the moving spirit in the development of *The Monthly Anthology,* a magazine which enlisted the co-operation and the literary contributions of many

of the ablest scholars and writers of New England in that day. Out of it grew the Anthology Club, and out of it, in turn, the great Boston Athenaeum Library. In the midst of these happy labors he died at the age of forty-two, leaving his widow with six children, all under ten, and with nothing for capital except a noble family tradition and a good library. Ralph Waldo was then eight years old.

His Mother. Fortunately, the widow was no stranger either to high thinking or to simple living. The church continued her husband's salary for six months, voted her five hundred dollars a year for seven years, and allowed her to remain in the manse for three years. She took in boarders, worked early and late, taught her sons to help with the housework, and kept the family expenses at a minimum. Ralph and his brother Edward had one overcoat between them and took turns wearing it. Even so, the family occasionally went hungry. When this happened, they had a way of meeting it: Aunt Mary Moody Emerson would gather the children around her and console them with stories of heroic endurance! Yet Mrs. Emerson was much more than a faithful household drudge striving to feed and clothe her children. She was a woman of rare strength of character, deep resources of spirit, gentle manners, natural grace, and quiet dignity.

Aunt Mary Moody Emerson. No account of Emerson's background is adequate that omits the vigorous rôle played by his stern and wise and altogether amazing

Aunt Mary. This scrawny, cadaverous, sharp-faced woman, in spite of her crotchety ways, thorny social mannerisms, and astonishing idiosyncrasies, had a Brain —one that must be described with a capital B. No other woman in American history had a more terrific personality. She probably influenced Ralph Waldo more than either his father or his mother. Thoreau found her "the wittiest and most vivacious woman" he knew. R. F. Dibble has called her "a female Diogenes, a philosophical saint, a devout skeptic, a Calvinistic rebel who revolted against everything and everybody including herself." Born in 1775 and soon orphaned, she had been brought up by an aunt and uncle who were so poor that one of her childish duties was to keep on the lookout for the sheriff, who might descend upon the family at any moment and arrest her uncle for debt. After her brother William, Ralph Waldo's father, died, she came to live for long periods with his widow, to help in the housework, and to care for the six children who had been born, she insisted, "to be educated." She undertook to supervise that education. Her own early reading had centered around the Bible, Milton, Young, and Jonathan Edwards. To these she had added later Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Locke, Byron, and many others. She saw to it that her nephews knew these minds. Her outer body she dressed fantastically, deliberately choosing bonnets that violated contemporary fashions and wearing as her street costume a series of shrouds she had bought for her delayed

burial. But her inner self she clothed with the thoughts of the philosophers and theologians and poets of the ages. Her nephews must have similar garments in their own mental wardrobes. Emerson said that she had the "fatal gift of penetration" into other people's intellectual vagaries. "She disgusted everybody because she knew them too well." She recognized this but refused to be frustrated by it. "I knew I was not destined to please," she wrote. "To live to give pain rather than pleasure . . . seems the spider-like necessity of my being on earth." She looked forward eagerly to the time when the "blessed worms" should eat her body and free her spirit for eternal fellowship with the saints and prophets. But while the worms lingered, she would not wait in self-pitying idleness. She would work, she would read, she would go where the leading minds of New England were conversing, and she would listen to them—yes, and speak up when she felt like it. She did speak up and time and again confounded such men as Bronson Alcott and Henry James by her incisive analysis of some weakness in their reasoning. Emerson said that she was "embarrassed by no Moses or Paul, no Angelo or Shakespeare." Her learning caused dismay in the hearts of New England ministers when she went into their homes seeking board and room as she traveled among the towns. She had read all the books in their libraries, and she liked nothing better than to discuss religious and philosophical issues. Her ready wit and caustic tongue set a faster pace than the average

minister could achieve. Even at eighty, when she had almost despaired that the beatific worms would ever come for her, Thoreau remarked that she was the youngest person in Concord. She kept a voluminous diary into which she poured her emotions, her observations, her strange mystical and apocalyptic imaginings, as well as the accounts of her activities. A typical entry of the latter recorded that she "Rose before light . . . visited from necessity once, and again for books; read Butler's *Analogy;* commented [probably to her nephews] on the Scriptures; read in a little book—Cicero's *Letters*—a few; touched Shakespeare; washed, carded, cleaned house, and baked." Such was the woman who took charge of the education of Ralph Waldo Emerson when he was eight and she thirty-six, in the prime of her dynamic energy. "Scorn trifles," she urged, "lift your aims; do what you are afraid to do. Sublimity of character must come from sublimity of motive." [2]

His Early Home. Thus out of the loins of seven generations of preachers and scholars came Ralph Waldo Emerson. Whatever heredity can contribute to the temper and quality of a young mind it brought as the birthright of this child born in the parish house of the First Unitarian Church of Boston on May 25, 1803.

[2] For further information about this remarkable woman the reader is referred to an account of her by Ralph Waldo Emerson, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1883, and to a short biography of her by R. F. Dibble included in *Modern Short Biographies,* by Marston Balch, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935, pp. 237 to 246.

His birthplace was but a kite-string's distance from that of Benjamin Franklin, nearly a century earlier. The Emerson home stood, village fashion, back from the street, in an orchard and garden with a bordering row of elms and Lombardy poplars. Cabot describes it as a boy's paradise, having just the right mixture of open ground, trees, woodpiles, and old sheds. It echoed every afternoon to cries of "hy-spy!" In the neighborhood stood a deserted barn or two, with open doors and remnants of haystacks, and near by was a pond where a beginner might try his skates. Not far away were wharves on salt water where flounders and tomcod swam about, just waiting apparently for a boy's fish line.

But young Ralph Waldo enjoyed none of these opportunities. Life was serious in his home, with little time for play. He never had a sled, or a pair of skates. His only toy seems to have been a hoop, and this he rolled by himself or with his brothers. Occasionally he watched other children from his own gateway, but his mother had cautioned him against "the rude boys" who were so often fighting—the West-enders against the South-enders—and besides his studies were always waiting. Not even his closest friends from childhood could ever remember seeing him in outdoor games. This lack of normal outdoor play life with boys of his own age probably accounts in large measure for the difficulty he had in later years in meeting and talking

with men and women in the common terms of their everyday experience.

Despite this real lack, his home life was happy. Nor did its straitened circumstances cramp the buoyancy of its spirit. The mother taught the children to accept their poverty as the natural environment of those who expected to lead lives of intellectual richness. She managed to keep the wolf from the door—"though never far away." She and Aunt Mary fed their minds with the best fare that good books and salty conversation could provide. If Mrs. Emerson failed in anything that could be expected of so burdened a widow, it was in demonstrativeness. She seldom let her children know the real tenderness she felt for them. Once, when Ralph Waldo and his older brother had returned late from some holiday excursion, she surprised them by exclaiming, "My sons, I have been in agony for you!" Ralph Waldo wrote that he went to bed "in bliss at the interest she showed." Like a true New Englander of the nineteenth century she expressed her mind, not her emotions.

His schooling began before he was three years old—not an unusual thing in those days when households were large and schools took the place of nurseries. His father was still living at the time and seems not to have been altogether pleased when, a week before the child's third birthday, he recorded, "Ralph does not read very well yet."

At seven he entered the local Latin School where the

master required him to learn by heart verses in both Latin and Greek. A little later he divided his time between this Latin School and a private one where he learned English grammar and composition. Here he wrote verses and on exhibition days sometimes recited them at the request of the schoolmaster. He developed a musical speaking voice. In none of his classes did he excel, but he was always somewhere near the top.

In a letter to his Aunt Mary when he was ten years old he recounted his activities during a typical day. He arose about five minutes before six, helped William make the fire, set the table for prayers, then called his mother. Next came the daily spelling contest among the children. He confessed he often felt an angry passion start in a corner of his heart when one of his brothers went above him by unfair means. Breakfast followed the spelling bee. Then he had from seven-fifteen to eight to play or read. He inclined to play. At eight he went to Latin School and at eleven to the private school for English and "ciphering." At one he went home to lunch and at two back again to the Latin School. Returning in mid-afternoon, he ran errands for his mother, brought in wood, and played around the place until supper time. After supper the family sang hymns, recited chapters from the Bible, and took turns reading from Rollin's history or some other book recommended by his mother or Aunt Mary. At eight he retired to his private devotions and then to bed. "There ends," he wrote, "the toils of the day."

All this may sound incomprehensible to a youth in the middle of the twentieth century. But it explains something of the austere quality of mind of one who came to be known as "the wisest American." He may not have had his share of sports, but he was no sissy. Whether a comparable character and intellect can be achieved without such a basic discipline remains to be demonstrated. Emerson did not find that discipline unduly irksome. Looking back upon it in after years, he gloried in it as a young Spartan soldier in his training for the field.

Of the six children in the Emerson home only Ralph and William lived to maturity, and it is worth noting that those who knew them all in their youth expected Edward and Charles to rise highest in after life. Ralph Waldo seemed always overshadowed by the brilliance of his younger brothers. But no hint of rivalry disturbed the tranquillity of the family. The brothers had a lively and good-humored affection for each other. From their earliest years they were taught to look forward to a life of intellectual leadership. At seven or eight years of age they could repeat from memory considerable passages from Shakespeare, Milton, Addison, and Pope, and read parts of Homer and Virgil in the original Greek and Latin.

College Years. At fourteen he was ready for college, but the family finances were at such low ebb that it seemed he must wait for better days. Then came the glad news that he had been appointed "President's

Freshman" at Harvard for the coming year, a position which granted him free lodging at the president's house and the privilege of earning three-fourths of his board by waiting tables in the Commons. His duties consisted in acting as a student-secretary to the president, summoning delinquent students to his office, and announcing to the student body various orders from the faculty. He passed the entrance examinations creditably and on October 1, 1817, became a full-fledged freshman.

From his entrance he planned to be a minister. That, too, was part of the family tradition. One other purpose shaped his efforts: to provide a proper house and support for his mother, whose poverty tugged at his heart, the more now that she was living in Concord, unable longer to meet the cost of living in Boston. In a letter to William written from Waltham, where he had gone in February of his freshman year to eke out a few dollars as a substitute schoolteacher, he wrote of his concern for her, and of his hopes:

. . . Here I am, safe and sound, as yet unmuzzled [that is, the schoolboys had not yet rubbed his face in snow] and unsnowballed. Since I have been here I have learned to skate, rhymed, written, and read, besides my staple commodity, school-keeping; and have earned me a new coat. . . . I did hope to have my *merces* in cash—I envied your bringing your five-dollar bills to mother—but Mr. R. said I needed a coat, and sent me to the tailor's, though I should rather have worn my old coat out first, and had the money. . . . It appears to

me the happiest earthly moment my most sanguine hopes can picture, if it should ever arrive, to have a home, comfortable and pleasant, to offer to mother; in some feeble degree to repay her for the cares and woes and inconveniences she has so often been subject to on our account alone. To be sure, after talking at this rate, I have done nothing myself; but then I've less faculties and age than most poor collegians. But when I am out of college I will, *Deo volente,* study divinity and keep school at the same time—try to be a minister and have a house. I'll promise no farther. . . . .[3]

Emerson, in spite of his background and his early training, did not shine in college. Nor was he very happy there. His natural reserve made it difficult for him to make friends easily. He cared nothing for athletic sports. His health was none too good. "Boy, you have no stamina!" the examining physician had exclaimed at his entrance. But the chief reason for his only average academic record was the dry nature of the teaching in those days. It consisted in "recitations" and repeating rather parrot fashion the lessons assigned. Notable exceptions were the classes of Edward Everett in Greek and George Ticknor in modern languages; Emerson attended their lectures with relish. At mathematics, especially at analytical geometry, he pronounced himself "a dunce." When he was graduated in 1821, he stood twenty-ninth in a class of fifty-nine. He was chosen class poet only after seven others had declined the honor.

[3] Cabot, *op, cit.,* pp. 67-69.

Yet he had not wasted time. He read widely books that interested him after he had completed the class assignments that only bored him. He kept notebooks in which he jotted down "phrases for use poetical," quotable passages from writers who stirred his imagination or challenged his own growing philosophy, and subjects for future study and for the sermons he expected some day to preach. Among the books he devoured outside of class work were Shakespeare, whom he knew almost by heart, Plato, Plotinus, Chaucer, Plutarch, Montaigne, Scott, George Fox, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, although he did not always approve the two latter. He devoted a whole year to a dissertation on the character of Socrates and won a prize on its merit. He composed a poem of two hundred and sixty lines entitled "Improvement" for a literary society of which he was one of the leading spirits. He won another prize for an essay, "The Present State of Ethical Philosophy," and a third one for declamation. The latter amounted to thirty dollars, and he triumphantly carried it home to buy his mother a new shawl, only to find that it must be spent to pay a baker's bill. Teachers and the more thoughtful students liked him. They found him companionable but not boisterous, fun-loving but not noisy, keen-witted but not talkative. Yet the fact stands out that none of his teachers prophesied for him any future greatness, and his few intimate classmates had difficulty in later years in recalling anything especially promising about him. He made but a pleasant impression—

Of manners gentle, of affections mild;
In wit a man, simplicity a child.

In a few years he would outdistance them all, but as yet he gave no sign of the power that was growing within him.

The Gloomy Years. The next three or four years were the gloomiest of his life. At eighteen, upon graduation from Harvard, his ardor for the ministry had cooled. Once no vision had seemed more appealing to him than the thought of himself as a young and eloquent pulpit orator persuading men to the truths of the Christian religion and to the new way of life which it taught. Now he was not so sure that the truths of religion were as absolute and clear-cut as he had supposed. Moreover, the broad culture of his classical reading had made him less certain that preaching was the best medium for him. He had begun to turn his thoughts toward teaching literature, rhetoric, and the arts. He had applied, at graduation time, for a position in this field at the Boston Latin School. His application had been denied on the ground that his academic standing at Harvard had not been high enough. Two or three other applications met a similar fate. Meanwhile, the poems he had been writing made only gentle ripples and no splash in the minds of his fellow students.

Humbled in his pride and uncertain of himself, he accepted the position offered to him by his brother

William, who for two years had been successfully conducting a private school for young ladies in the old Emerson house in Boston. Ralph Waldo's task was to teach a variety of subjects, chiefly composition. Years afterward he still recalled vividly the terror those girls inspired in him. He had had little intercourse with girls of any station—and these came from well-to-do homes. He lacked his brother's self-confidence, his grace and ease of manner, and his effortless capacity to maintain discipline. For some strange reason—strange because customarily he was more original and independent—he felt that he must teach only the subjects assigned and in the comparatively lifeless way conventional at the time. He had not yet realized that a teacher's first duty is to teach *persons* rather than subjects. Had he shared with them the poems and the novels, the plays and the essays in which he had found so much joy in his own undergraduate days, he might have made his task delightful to them and to himself. As it was, he plodded conscientiously through his daily classes and let his imagination soar only in the evenings when he retired to his room to read Hindu and Persian literature, and write essays in philosophy, morals, and biography.

The depth of his discouragement, after a year of this life, he poured out in a burst of self-criticism in his journal. He compared his present low estate with that of twelve months earlier when he was finishing college,

writing the class poem, and looking into the future with such hope.

I was then delighted with my recent honors; traversing my chamber, flushed and proud of a poet's fancies and the day when they were to be exhibited; pleased with ambitious prospects, and careless because ignorant of the future. But now I am a hopeless schoolmaster, just entering upon years of trade, to which no distinct limit is placed; toiling through this miserable employment without even the poor satisfaction of discharging it well; for the good suspect me, and the geese dislike me.[4]

Aunt Mary Moody Emerson, hearing of his discouragement—and not entirely displeased with it, for she feared that a too-early success would do him more harm than a period of travail of soul—wrote him a characteristically prickly letter. Had his poetic Muse become faint and mean? she asked. Well it might if Ralph Waldo had not prepared his soul for its celestial abode. "You are not inspired at heart because you are the nursling of surrounding circumstances." With all his gifts he was indulging in self-pity rather than thinking of what he might contribute to the public good. She urged him to get away into the woods for meditation in seclusion and let Nature speak to him of larger things. He went. In the two years that followed he often went. He began to work himself out of his self-pity, to strengthen his fibre against discouragement,

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 73.

and to turn his mind outward from brooding upon what seemed the hopeless drudgery of his days.

Choosing His Profession. Naturally he turned it upon the profession he would prefer to follow. He noted that there was a plethora of teachers pouring from the colleges, but a dearth of good ministers. Christianity in the neighborhood of Boston seemed to have come to a crisis. The young preachers "imagine that they have rescued and purified the Christian creed; the old that the boundless liberality of the day has swept away the essence with the corruptions of the Gospel, and has arrived at too sceptical refinements." He grew impatient and disgusted at the preaching he heard. He began to feel that he had been too hasty in turning away from the ministry. Perhaps he has something to contribute in this crisis. He took inventory of his ability and his convictions. He had imagination; and "the highest species of reasoning upon divine subjects is rather the fruit of a sort of moral imagination, than of the reasoning machines." He had a disciplined mind and a keen relish for the beauties of poetry. He had a heritage from seven generations of ministers that no other young man in America could claim. He knew what good they had done, what courage and strength of spirit they had brought to the early settlers and pioneers. Would he be content to do less, to let the tradition die out?

On the other hand, he appraised his abilities below his ambitions. His reasoning faculty he thought "pro-

portionably weak." He did not think himself capable of answering all the arguments of the rationalists—David Hume, for example. "Where is the accomplished stripling who can cut off his most metaphysical head?" Many had tried it during the half century since Hume's death, but none had succeeded. The origin of evil, the nature and limitations of human virtue—to these and a score of other questions Emerson had found no answer. Yet, in spite of many doubts and unanswered questions he did have a few genuine convictions about the fundamentals of Christianity. His letters to his Aunt Mary and to his brother William discussed these pros and cons. He began to borrow theological books from a local minister. Later he sought out Dr. William Ellery Channing, his Boston pastor and ministerial hero, talked with him from time to time, and read books he recommended.

At the end of his third year of teaching his mind was made up. He would enter the ministry. In his journal of April 24, 1824, he records his decision: "In a month I shall be legally a man; and I deliberately dedicate my time, my talents, and my hopes to the church." During the following year, while still teaching, he began his professional studies under Dr. Channing's general direction. On February 9, 1825, he entered the divinity school at Cambridge, being admitted to the middle class.

Battle with Ill-health Begins. One month later ill-health forced him to suspend his studies and leave Cambridge. His eyes "refused to read"; he developed

rheumatism and symptoms of a lung disease. Here was a blow that might have excused another period of gloom. But gloom was behind him now. His purpose was set. He knew what he wanted to do. This break in health was but a barrier to be hurdled. He went to Newton to work upon his uncle's farm, hoping that the outdoor toil would strengthen his vitality.

Completing His Preparation for the Ministry. After six months on the farm he was sufficiently improved in health to take over a public school at Chelmsford, and some months later his brother Edward's private school in Roxbury, Edward retiring because of illness. Still later he moved into Boston, where he could make a home for his mother and conduct a small school of his own. During these months of teaching he attended lectures at the Divinity School in Cambridge, but his weak eyes prevented him from taking notes. The school authorities, convinced of his ability and character, excused him from written examinations, and he was "approbated to preach" by the Middlesex Association of Ministers on October 10, 1826, at the age of twenty-three.

Even at twenty-three, as he enters the ministry, he shows little of the power he is later to manifest. His brothers—William, the older, Edward and Charles, younger—still outshine him. In appearance he is tall, thin, blonde, aquiline in feature, blue-eyed, and a little pale. Quiet in manner and calm in mind, he is seldom excited. His friends—and they are not many in num-

ber—know him as kindly and possessed of a dry humor. He has around him a wall of reserve which he will let no one penetrate. To a remarkable degree he has learned self-reliance and how to be happy in his own thoughts. And those thoughts are increasingly the distillation of the best the sages and the prophets have communicated to the human race, together with his own reflections upon them.

Another Battle for Health. His health now took another turn for the worse. Instead of entering at once upon some pastorate, he was forced to go South to a more moderate climate. His rheumatism bothered, and a stricture in his lung gave him intense pain in cold weather and after any form of exercise, even walking. For a year he lived in North Carolina and Florida, frequently supplying pulpits and always making notes on sermons he hoped to preach. Upon his return to Boston in the Spring of the following year he preached for a few weeks at First Church in the absence of its minister. But the strain was too much. "I am all clay; no iron," he wrote to William. "I meditate, now and then, total abdication of the profession, on the score of ill health." And, seven months later, in his journal: "I am writing sermons. I am living cautiously; yea, treading on eggs, to strengthen my constitution. It is a long battle, this of mine betwixt life and death, and it is wholly uncertain to whom the game belongs." He continued to play the game cautiously for two years. No one ever saw him run or exert himself in any move-

ment beyond necessity. He had to cherish every ounce of energy for the fight against death.

Meanwhile, his brother Edward, whom he dearly loved, was fighting the same battle. But Edward, gifted with preternatural energy as well as brilliance, could not restrain himself. He worked and studied at fever heat, exceeding the capacity of his frail constitution, lost first his health and then his mind, and finally, after recovering the latter, exiled himself, broken in spirit, to a clerkship in the West Indies. His brilliant career was blasted.

Emerson, shocked and grief-stricken by the calamity, resolved lest the same fate befall him, to protect his own health at all costs. He cultivated what he called his "silliness"—his ability to laugh and enjoy the lighter side of life. He strolled in the woods, meditated quietly beside brooks, and picked blueberries in the fields. Not easy, this restraint, for a young man eager and impatient to get on in the profession he has so recently entered. Occasionally he would preach as a substitute; the people liked him and would invite him back for a succession of Sundays. Two or three churches signified their willingness to call him as pastor. He had to say no. But his reward eventually came in sounder health. He never entirely overcame his rheumatism or the stricture in his lungs, and his eyes never became strong, but his constitution gradually strengthened until he was able to bear his ailments with some degree of confidence.

Love, Marriage, and First Pastorate. Now that the tide had turned and the "winds blew softly from the favoring west," he felt the urge of all young blood for romance. He visited one day in a friend's home in Concord, New Hampshire, where he met Ellen Tucker, daughter of a Boston merchant. Within a year they were engaged. She was seventeen, and "very beautiful, by universal consent." He wrote William that he was "as happy as it is safe in life to be." Shortly afterward Emerson was ordained an assistant to Rev. Henry Ware of the Second Church of Boston, and upon Mr. Ware's resignation (to join the faculty of the Divinity School at Harvard) was installed as the pastor of the church. It was not a large church; but it had an enviable tradition of great preachers, including Cotton and Increase Mather, in its pulpit. Its congregation, composed of members of the middle class, probably numbered between three and four hundred. Emerson's salary as pastor was twelve hundred dollars a year. He was twenty-six years old.

Established in the parish house with his lovely bride, his mother under the same roof, his brothers and the young people of the parish running in frequently for cheerful conversation, he began his pastorate with a high heart. He carried on the usual duties of a minister: preaching, visiting the sick, baptizing the young, marrying, counseling, looking after the poor, and burying the dead. To these he added extra work in the form of special meetings designed to attract persons

who were not church members, other week-night lectures on the Bible, addresses at various schools, and a number of civic activities. He also served on the school board and as chaplain of the state senate. He found none of these duties irksome, although his natural reserve often impeded his effectiveness. A veteran of the Revolution, about to die, one day summoned Emerson to his bedside. When he noted the young minister's hesitation, he rose in wrath and exclaimed, "Young man, if you don't know your business you had better go home!" Emerson himself, looking back in after years upon his parish work, said that he did not excel. At any rate he performed his duties conscientiously.

But at preaching he did excel. He determined at the outset to avoid the mistakes of his contemporaries in the pulpit. He had found their sermons too long, too narrow in spirit, too inclined to harp on a few ancient strings, too sanctimonious, and too little addressed to people's practical problems here and now. He announced that he proposed "to use a freedom befitting the greatness of the Gospel and its universal application to all human concerns." He would be direct and practical, unafraid of innovation either in thought or expression. He would use language that the man on the street could understand. He would preach short sermons. He would not be sensational or grandiose. He would prepare every sermon with the needs of his individual hearers in mind.

Hewing to these lines, he often shocked the old-

timers by his "unsanctified discourse," but he charmed the younger members of his congregation. His simplicity and directness gave them a sense of the living reality of religion. That was exactly what he sought.

Since the preparation of this brief biography was begun, Professor A. C. McGiffert has published a volume of twenty-five of the one hundred seventy-one sermons Emerson preached while pastor of the Second Church.[5] The sermons, ably prefaced and annotated, are of great value in understanding the growing mind of Emerson and tracing the progress of his thought. A few of the titles indicate their practical nature: "On Showing Piety at Home," "Trifles," "Conversation," "The Individual and the State," "The Authority of Jesus," "Self-Culture," "Trust Yourself," "Find Your Calling," "Religion and Society."

His great object in all these sermons was "to explore the nature of God." He recognized that such exploration would be but the "gropings of infant weakness, when compared to God himself"; yet it was man's highest quest, and in pursuing it he would elevate his own thoughts and come closer to an understanding of the universe. God, he held, as parent of man's mind, was both intimate and friendly. Man has three ways of knowing Him: through reason; through "the oracle within," "conscience," or "the heart"; and through revelation. He had not yet come to his great idea of God indwelling in Nature and in man—the idea which,

[5] *Young Emerson Speaks,* Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1938.

as Professor McGiffert says, ushered in a new epoch in the religious thinking of America—but the seeds of it had begun to sprout. Other ideas, later developed in his essays, were also germinating in these early sermons: individual responsibility, self-reliance, every day is Judgment Day, the supremacy of ethical action over theological formula, the necessity to test spiritual truth for ourselves, and the sublime capacity of man to develop his own spiritual nature. Nearly half of his sermons related to improvement of character, and a quarter of them to the meaning of religion. In all of them he endeavored to show the spiritual significance of the commonplace activities and attitudes of daily life. His second bible was the Book of Common Life.

Calamities and the End of His Pasotrate. The exultant note upon which he started his ministry soon ended. Within six months his wife became so ill of tuberculosis that he had to take her to the South. Shortly after their return she died. Emerson suffered her loss intensely, and his journals for months afterward contain poignant entries—bits of plaintive verse and recollections of the sunshine of her presence. He spoke of her as "a bright revelation to me of the best nature of woman." For nearly two years he walked regularly every morning to her grave in Roxbury. During the same period his younger brother Charles failed in health and had to be sent to Porto Rico to join Edward.

These calamities weighed heavily upon him. But

another matter caused him additional anxiety. Increasingly, as he went about his work at the parish, he felt himself to be something of a misfit in the ministry. The ancient forms of its thought and its worship restricted him. He really cared more for a pursuit of truth than for the administration of a church with the multiplicity of demands it entailed. By temperament he preferred philosophy to persons—a fatal fault in a minister. The feeling grew upon him until it came to a focus on one of the simple rites of his church—the Lord's Supper. He would administer it as a service of commemoration, but he could not sincerely regard it as a sacrament established by Christ for all his followers in all the centuries. Stating his reasons for his views, he offered his resignation. After some debate it was regretfully accepted by the congregation. Pastor and people severed their official relationship with mutual respect and affection. Emerson regretted the decision of the church to accept his resignation; he would have preferred to have it say: We will accept your judgment about this rite and discontinue its traditional observance. Had it done so, however, his resignation would only have been postponed. He cared less and less about the outer forms of religion and more and more for its inner essence. A new wine had begun to ferment in his thinking about religion; sooner or later it would surely burst the old wineskin.

Now that he had quitted his pastorate, despair settled upon his honest heart. He had followed his concience,

and it had seemingly led him only into unemployment. His fellow ministers had described his views as "Quakerish," and many had whispered loudly that insanity ran in the family. His brother Charles wrote to their Aunt Mary, "Waldo is sick. His spirits droop; he looks to the South, and thinks he would like to go away. I never saw him so disheartened." His health broke again, and his doctor advised a sea voyage. He wrote a letter of farewell to the congregation, took passage on a tiny vessel, and sailed for Europe on Christmas Day, 1832. His professional ministry was ended. He never returned to it. What he would do next he did not know. At twenty-nine he must make a fresh start.

A Fresh Start. His trip to Europe had more significance than either he or his friends expected. The rest and the salt air put to rout his bodily ills and his mental fatigue—but that was a less important effect. The major benefit was a new perspective, a re-awakened self-confidence, a sense of the bigness of the new ideas that were stirring within him, and a budding friendship with Thomas Carlyle. He left America a "wasted and peevish invalid"; he returned a young philosopher eager, though not quite ready, to try his wings.

He had been at sea but a few days when one morning he arose early, went on deck, and meditated as he looked at the clouds alight with the rays of the rising sun. What, he asked himself, was he going to Europe for? To see the cities of the Old World, their paint-

ings and sculpture? Yes, but they were all only the outer expressions of an inner creative force. The force itself was a living one—present in the ever-changing beauty of those fleecy clouds, in the strong-winged seagulls he watched as they skimmed the waves—"they are works of art better worth your enthusiasm, masterpieces of eternal power; strictly eternal, because now active, and ye need not go so far to seek what ye would not seek at all if it were not within you." That force, that power, lived at its highest in the human mind. He would go, therefore, not to forget himself but to find himself. He would seek out not only the dead past but the living energy of the present. He would see and talk with the men in whose minds was flowing the eternal creative force which he felt also in himself.

He managed to secure letters of introduction to Coleridge, Wordsworth, J. S. Mill, and Landor, whose works he had been reading in America. None of them had ever heard of him; he was only a twenty-nine-year-old American out of a job. He knew his own shyness and diffidence about meeting people. No matter; he would forget his shyness; he would search out and commune with these literary giants—these minds which until now he had known only through printed pages. He would converse with them, match his thoughts with theirs. So he searched them out and talked with them. He came away admiring them, but surer than ever that the same creative energy burned in him and that he had

hold of ideas even more vital, more potent for the new age, than theirs.

Making Friends with Carlyle. Better than all the others he liked Carlyle, the youngest, the poorest, the least known among them. Emerson had read in the *Edinburgh Review* and other journals some articles by this forceful and philosophical young Scot—articles about German literature and new currents of thought as yet unknown in America. From a fellow traveler in Rome he secured a note of introduction to Carlyle, and, when he reached Edinburgh, inquired for him. No one there seemed to have heard of Carlyle. From the University, however, he finally learned that the young author was living in a remote and wild district, sixteen miles from the city. No railway or bus came near the place. Emerson hired a carriage and drove to it. Only a day earlier Carlyle had written in his own diary, "I am left here the solitariest, most stranded, most helpless creature that I have been for many years. Nobody asks me to work at articles." He was living in desperate hope, poor and independent, but lonely and unrecognized. Emerson, no less solitary and even more unrecognized, knocked at Carlyle's cottage door and presented his note of introduction. His host (only eight years older than himself) had never before heard of him. Emerson later described his visit:

I found him one of the most simple and frank of men, and became acquainted with him at once. We walked over several miles of hills, and talked upon all

the great questions that interest us most. The comfort of meeting the man is that he speaks sincerely; that he feels himself to be so rich, and that he is above the meanness of pretending to knowledge which he has not, and Carlyle does not pretend to have solved the great problems, but rather to be an observer of their solution as it goes forward in the world.

That was just the way Emerson had begun to think of himself—as an *observer* of the spiritual forces in the world. His observations did not always agree with Carlyle's, and he thought the latter's notion, that all man needed for his salvation was to be well governed, a delusion. Nevertheless here was a thinker who had force and passion—two gifts which Emerson felt lacking in himself. And beneath his crusty exterior beat a humble and affectionate heart.

Carlyle, writing of their first meeting, said, "That man came to see me, I don't know what brought him, and we kept him one night, and then he left us. I saw him go up the hill; I didn't go with him to see him descend. I preferred to watch him mount and vanish like an angel." He had found young Emerson deluded in some of his ideas but possessed of a rare peace and serenity. Thus began the friendship between these two unknowns, each destined within ten years to become the recognized leader of thought in his own country. For forty years they corresponded, and their published letters fill two sizable volumes—the enduring record of a great comradeship and an invaluable commentary on

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European and American thought of the nineteenth century.

It may have been this experience that provided the impetus for Emerson's lines which have brought new hope to thousands as lonely and despairing as he was when he set out on that European journey:

Be of good cheer, brave spirit; steadfastly
Serve that low whisper thou hast served; for know,
God hath a select family of sons
Now scattered wide thro' earth, and each alone,
Who are thy spiritual kindred, and each one
By constant service to that inward law,
Is weaving the sublime proportions
Of a true monarch's soul. Beauty and strength,
The riches of a spotless memory,
The eloquence of truth, the wisdom got
By searching of a clear and loving eye
That seeth as God seeth—these are their gifts,
And Time, who keeps God's word, brings on the day
To seal the marriage of these minds with thine,
Thine everlasting lovers. Ye shall be
The salt of the elements, world of the world.[6]

He returned to America in the autumn of 1833, restored in health, refreshed in mind, and resolved in purpose to develop his own philosophy, and to help, if he might, to liberate American thought from dependence on Europe.

Formulating His Thought. On shipboard, home-

[6] From the *Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson.* By permission of Houghton Mifflin Co., publishers.

ward bound, he attempted to formulate his philosophy as clearly as he could in the stage at which he had arrived. A few extracts from his journal will show the trend of his thought (the italics are mine):

I believe that the error of the religionists lies in this: that they do not know the extent, or the harmony, or the depth of their moral nature; that they are clinging to little positive verbal formal versions of the moral law—and very imperfect versions too—while the infinite laws, the great circling truths whose only adequate symbol is the material laws, the astronomy, etc., are all unobserved, and sneered at, when spoken of, as frigid and insufficient. I call Calvinism such an imperfect version of the moral law. Unitarianism is another. . . . A man contains all that is needful to his government within himself. . . . All real good or evil that can befall him must be from himself. . . . *There is a correspondence between the human soul and everything that exists in the world;* more properly, everything that is known to man. . . . The purpose of life seems to be to acquaint man with himself. He is not to live to the future as described to him, but to live to the real future by living to the real present. *The highest revelation is that God is in every man. . . .*[7]

Soon after his return he elaborated this thought in a sermon preached from his old pulpit to which the people, as a gesture of good will, had invited him.

There is a revolution of religious opinion taking effect around us, as it seems to me the greatest of all

[7] Cabot, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-03.

revolutions which have ever occurred. . . . Man begins to hear a voice that fills the heavens and the earth, saying that God is within him; . . . Within this erring, passionate, mortal self, sits a supreme, calm, immortal mind, whose powers I do not know, but it is stronger than I; it is wiser than I; it never approved me in any wrong; I seek counsel of it in my doubts; I repair to it in my dangers; I pray to it in my undertakings. . . . In this doctrine . . . is the key by which the words that fell from Christ upon the character of God can alone be well and truly explained. "The Father is in me: I am in the Father, yet the Father is greater than I."

I anticipate auspicious effects from the further opening of this faith upon the public mind. . . . .[8]

Determining His New Course. "Opening this faith upon the public mind" is his object from this time forth —the north star by which he steers his course. But *how* to open it? He would preach on Sundays, here and there about Boston as invited;[9] but he would not accept another pastorate; he must keep free from administrative work, and he must seek a wider audience than any church could give him. That audience was not of intelligentsia, but of common people—working men, farmers, young people puzzled over their careers.

They are of all conditions and natures [he wrote to Carlyle]. They are, some of them, mean in attire, and

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 212-14.

[9] He supplied for many Sundays the pulpit of a tiny church at East Lexington, Massachusetts. One of its members later said, "We are very simple people and don't understand anybody but Mr. Emerson."

some mean in station, and some mean in body, having inherited from their parents faces and forms scrawled with the traits of every vice. Not in churches, or in courts, or in large assemblies . . . but in lonely and obscure places . . . a hireling in other men's cornfields, schoolmasters who teach a few children rudiments for a pittance, ministers of small parishes. . . .

Such an audience he could reach only through lecturing and writing.

So Emerson settled down to lecturing and writing. He secured requests to speak to the Boston Society of Natural History, the Mechanic's Institute, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, the American Institute of Education, and various other non-church bodies. He addressed each one upon some subject pertinent to its own background and purpose, but before he had concluded he managed to bring the lecture around to the relation of that subject to this fundamental thesis: the living God dwelling in man and in Nature, the visible universe as the symbol of the spiritual, and the identity and universality of the moral law in the spiritual and material world. He spoke on Natural History, on Biography, on Literature, on Education, on Culture, on Slavery—nearly every subject, in fact, that concerns the life of man on this wandering planet among the stars. And he did not omit the stars.

He penetrated the public mind slowly, with a wedge here and a wedge there. He did not blast it open, nor sweep across it like a prairie fire. It was often weeks

between lecture-appointments. Some months after he had begun this new career, he wrote to his brother William:

> I have been writing three lectures on Natural History, and of course reading as much geology, chemistry, and physics as I could find. Meantime my ethics and theologies lie in abeyance; for you cannot preach to people unless they will hear. However, some of the faithful remain upon this portion of the earth, and by and by we may find a little chapel of the truth. . . .[10]

So slowly did he progress and so few were the invitations to lecture that he considered altering his plan and retiring to some remote spot in the country where he could live cheaply and gather around him a few kindred spirits. Fortunately about that time he received a small legacy from his father-in-law's estate. This freed him from financial worry and enabled him to hang on.

Establishing a New Home. The new poise he had achieved upon his return from Europe and upon embarking on his career of lecturing was almost shattered by the death of his brother Edward. He felt bereaved of a part of himself. He had never quite given up the expectation that Edward would recover and fulfil the promise of his brilliant youth. But the Emerson constitution had not stood the strain of Edward's energy. Ralph Waldo felt now more than ever the responsibility to carry on the family tradition of spiritual lead-

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

ership. Yet he went about his work with a heavy heart until he met Lydia Jackson of Plymouth. Bliss Perry describes her as a "woman of warm, opulent nature, endowed with humor and patience. She did not write poetry . . . she lived it." Emerson married her in September, 1835; and together with his mother and brother Charles they established their home at Concord in a modest house with a garden and a small orchard. Near by was Walden Pond and around it Walden Woods, immortalized by Thoreau. This house was Emerson's home for the rest of his life. Lydia brought to it the orderliness which he woefully lacked, and she added a kindliness and charm which made their home life one of rare serenity.

With her help Emerson now fixed for himself a daily routine to which he clung for the next forty years. Mornings (from six o'clock to one—a seven-hour stretch) he devoted to study and writing; afternoons to walking, working in garden and orchard, and meditating; evenings to conversation with his ever-widening circle of friends. He accepted his civic responsibilities cheerfully, joined the fire company, served on the school committee, participated in the Social Circle (organized much like a modern Rotary Club), and opened his own library for those who cared to read. His fellow townsmen came to have a deep affection for him. He had not been there long when one day a neighbor reported to him that a stray pig was doing mischief in the neighborhood. Yes, said Emerson,

but why should *he* be notified. Because, his neighbor told him, he was a newly married man, and by an old Concord custom the business of looking after stray pigs belonged to the newly married men. Emerson went after the pig.

Finances. Throughout these years of his expanding reputation Emerson's income averaged between $1,500 and $2,200 a year. Of this about $1,200 came from the legacy left him by his father-in-law; the rest from his lecturing and preaching. His lecture fees ranged from fifteen dollars to fifty dollars each, and the latter were few until he became a national figure. Just how Mrs. Emerson managed her household with its large bills for doctors and for books and for the family's generous hospitality is a secret which, as Bliss Perry says, "died with the generations which added to the Ten Commandments these other three: 'Eat it up!' 'Wear it out!' and 'Make it do!' " She did manage it, and the family kept out of debt. They stayed at home and found it not only cheaper, but more to their liking, to bring the world to their door through books and friends. Income from Emerson's own books was almost negligible until he was nearly sixty years old. Even then its purchasing power was greatly reduced by the depreciation of currency during and following the Civil War. One of the loveliest memories recorded of him is of the time and painstaking attention he gave to the publication in America of the books of the much more impoverished Carlyle. It was before the days of

international copyright laws; and Carlyle's books would doubtless have been pirated in this country without any return whatever to the author, had not Emerson arranged for their publication himself and personally seen to it that Carlyle received fair royalties. With the first fifty dollars Emerson thus sent, Carlyle purchased a much-needed horse and named him "Yankee." When Emerson sent a later draft for five hundred dollars for royalties on *The French Revolution,* the gratitude of the young and burdened Scot made him almost inarticulate; he had never had so much money in his life.

A Death, a Birth, and New Friends. A few months after they had established their Concord home, Ralph Waldo's brother Charles died—another victim of the lung disease that cursed the family. "Who can supply his place to me?" wrote Emerson. "None. . . . The eye is closed that was to see nature for me and give me leave to see. . . . I mourn for the commonwealth which has lost, before yet it had learned his name, the promise of his eloquence and rare public gifts. . . . He looked forward to the debates of the senate on great political questions as to his first and native element. . . . I shall never hear such speaking as his . . ." [11]

In October of the same year he heard a new voice in his home—that of his infant son Waldo, "a piece of love and sunshine"—and his grief lifted.

With Lydia's encouragement, he began now to in-

[11] *Ibid.,* pp. 273, 274.

vite new friends into their home: Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Hoar (who had been engaged to marry his brother Charles), James Freeman Clarke, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Holmes, Henry James the elder, James Elliot Cabot, and other creative and electric minds. "It is always a great refreshment," wrote Emerson, "to see a very intelligent person. It is like being set in a large place. You stretch your limbs and dilate to your utmost size." They felt the same way about him, for having come once they came again and again until they beat a path to his door.

The Transcendental Club and the Dial. Out of that circle of freinds, revolving around Emerson, grew the Transcendental Club and its magazine *The Dial.* They were the young literary and philosophical rebels of their day. No two of them agreed upon anything except this, that they rebelled against the stock notions and traditional beliefs of the orthodox. To a considerable extent, too, they agreed with Emerson in believing in a "divine essence" working in the world, especially in men's minds—an essence that could not be shut up in creeds, or scientific formulas, or social conventions. They wanted to free their own minds and the minds of their fellows so that this divine essence could work its beneficent will within them. They objected to the smugness, the complacency, of Boston aristocracy. They found its religious orthodoxy—even Unitarianism —sterile, and its economic orthodoxy opposed to the

spirit of republican America. They were restive under external authority of any sort and fearful of all religious symbols because they so quickly lost their original significance. They felt that the sooner they could cut themselves away from the Old World and all its dying philosophies and theologies and economic systems, the sooner they could launch out on new seas under the guidance of the divine spirit within them. They had no creed of their own, nor did they want one. They had what Emerson called a "feeling for the Infinite," which was as near as he ever came to defining Transcendentalism. Doubtless they owed a part of their origin to Kant and to Goethe and the whole school of German transcendentalists, but they preferred to think that they were following their own inner urges rather than historic precedents. They did not call their faith Transcendentalism—that was a name smeared upon it by their ridiculers—but they accepted it and made it stand for a willingness to follow the divine spirit that transcended all attempts to confine it within ancient creeds and forms. They founded *The Dial* as the outlet for their literary expression. It soon became the most yeasty magazine of New England and spread the ferment of their faith to the West.

Opposition. Emerson never had to face such intense bitterness of enmity as that which bedeviled Milton and Jefferson and Fox and Darwin and many other leaders of thought. As Oliver Wendell Holmes said of him, "He was an iconoclast without a hammer, who took

down our idols from their pedestals so tenderly that it seemed an act of worship." Yet his fresh thought was not exactly welcomed. It is hard for us to realize that, as Bliss Perry says, "for decades the very name of Emerson was a newspaper joke, a synonym of absurdity and obscurity of thought." Once, after he had concluded a lecture at Middlebury, Vermont, the presiding officer called upon a local clergyman to offer a prayer with which to close the meeting. The minister offered this: "We beseech thee, O Lord, to deliver us from ever hearing any more such transcendental nonsense as we have just listened to from this sacred desk." Emerson remarked afterward, "He seemed a very conscientious, plain-spoken man."

Late in 1837 Emerson invited Carlyle to come to Concord for a visit. But early in 1838 he had to retract the invitation. "At this moment I would not have you here on any account. The publication of my *Address to the Divinity College* has been the occasion of an outcry in all our leading local newspapers against my 'infidelity,' 'pantheism,' and 'atheism.' The writers warn all and sundry against me, and against whatever is supposed to be related to my connection of opinion, etc.; against Transcendentalism, Goethe, and *Carlyle*.... I do not wish to embroil you in my parish differences. . . . Just now, in Boston, where I am known as your editor, I fear you lose by the association . . ."

That address to the graduating class of the Divinity College (Harvard Divinity School) had caused some-

thing of a "tempest in a washbowl," as Emerson put it. He had told the young candidates for the ministry that the church was dead but that it could be revived (1) by seeking a new revelation valid for the times, (2) by cultivating solitude and self-reliance, and (3) by a fresh sense of conviction that redemption must be sought in the soul of the individual, not in some historic act of two thousand years ago, however noble. "God *is,* not was"; he insisted, "He *speaketh,* not spake." This seemed little short of blasphemy to a few of the professors. The directors of the school were in a rage. The students, however, liked the straightforward challenge and heard him again on the same day.

When, some years later, he spoke at Cambridge against the Fugitive Slave Law, his audience protested so loudly that he could hardly continue. "The hisses, shouts, and cat-calls made it impossible for Mr. Emerson to go on," wrote a Harvard professor describing the scene. "Through all this there was never a finer spectacle of dignity and composure than he presented. He stood with quietness until the hubbub was over and then went on with the next word. It was as if nothing had happened: there was no repetition, no allusion to what had been going on, no sign that he was moved, and I cannot describe with what added weight the next words fell."

Wherever he spoke on religious subjects many in his audience seemed to think that he "came to unsettle

Christian beliefs." They looked upon him as a devil's advocate and not infrequently hurled bitter accusations at him.

Against all such opposition Emerson provided himself with an attitude that served him as an armor. He regarded himself simply as an observer and reporter of spiritual forces. He was only telling what he found beneath the surface of external nature and in the deep recesses of the human soul. If his hearers did not like what he saw, it did not affect the truth. If they saw something different, it was their privilege, yes, their duty, to say so. Truth was the subject and the goal—not himself. Against that armor the angry shafts of personal criticism struck vainly and fell blunted and ineffectual at his feet.

Keeping Steadily at It for Forty Years. We have traced Emerson's roots. We have observed him growing through the first thirty-five years. We have watched him weather the storms of poverty, ill-health, personal grief, and public calumny. We have witnessed the struggles of his soul as he sought to understand the meaning of life. We have seen him emerging at last into maturity, like a New England elm, tall, strong, graceful and serene in spite of rocky soil and long winters. His home, his habits, his friends, his purpose, his faith are established.

For the next forty years he kept steadily growing. He became, as Professor McGiffert says, an "itinerant lay preacher . . . to the advancing West, and finally

minister at large to imprisoned, dormant, and inquiring minds everywhere." He gave men new faith in themselves, convincing them of a divine and living essence within them. That faith provides the ultimate basis of democracy—the conviction of the worth-whileness of every human being. He helped them to see past revelations in perspective, not to be denied, but to be recognized as only a manifestation of a creative power which is eternal and which works today throughout the universe and in the minds of individual men. God not only spake; He *speaks*. His spirit still moves upon chaos and brings order out of disorder, light out of darkness, growth out of stagnation, and beauty out of ugliness. That spirit is in you—don't stifle it; free it; work with it; trust yourself to it, and it will transform your life and the world around you. It is in your fellow men; therefore honor them, co-operate with them. That was the heart of his message. Perhaps it is better to say that it was the peak of his faith from which he surveyed the affairs of man. From that coign of vantage he observed all life—physical, intellectual, and spiritual. He sought to interpret it, integrate it, and discover its eternal values.

The story of his life for these forty years is the story of that interpretation of life making its way through lectures and essays across America and Europe. The lectures and essays, and his daily journal (which he used as a reservoir for his thought) now fill more than a score of volumes—a literary legacy that will prob-

ably endure long after the last skyscraper, the last machine, and the last hoard of material wealth of the twentieth century have crumbled and blown away in some future dust storm.

A bare chronological outline of the chief events in his life during those forty fruitful years must suffice us. The list of his lectures, briefly abstracted, occupies nearly a hundred pages in Cabot's *Memoir*. Obviously we cannot deal with them here. They treat of nearly every subject pertinent to human culture. Their preparation consumed most of his time. He reworked them as essays, and as such they constitute the bulk of his books. In 1841, at the age of thirty-eight, he published his first collection of these essays—"History," "Self-Reliance," "Compensation," "Spiritual Laws," "Love," "Friendship," "Prudence," "Heroism," "The Over-Soul," "Circles," "Intellect," and "Art." The following year his first-born son Waldo died, and he was overwhelmed with grief. His poem "Threnody" reveals the heartbroken father distilling from his grief a triumphant hope expressed in these lines which have comforted many a bereaved person:

> . . . . What is excellent
> As God lives, is permanent;
> Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain;
> Heart's love will meet thee again.[12]

[12] From "Threnody," *Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. By permission of Houghton Mifflin Co., publishers.

In time his three other children—a son and two daughters—chased the shadows from his house.

In 1842 (the same year) he became editor of *The Dial* but relinquished it after two years, preferring to devote his time to writing his own thoughts rather than editing those of others. At forty-one he published his *Essays, Second Series,* including "The Poet," "Experience," "Character," "Manners," "Gifts," "Nature," "Politics," and "Nominalist and Realist." At forty-four his first volume of poems appeared.

His reputation had by this time reached England, and in response to urgent invitations from some of his readers there, particularly of Alexander Ireland, he made a second visit to that country. He saw Carlyle again and met many other distinguished men who hailed him as America's first literary genius. He lectured at Edinburgh and in London. Even more than in America his fresh views and vigorous expression shocked the orthodox but aroused superlative enthusiasm in liberal circles. These English lectures, on biographical subjects—"Plato," "Swedenborg," "Montaigne," "Shakespeare," "Napoleon," and "Goethe"—he published two years later under the title *Representative Men.*

Nine years after his second visit to England he published *English Traits* and four years later a third volume of essays entitled *Conduct of Life,* which Carlyle thought his best work. It contained his meditations on "Fate," "Power," "Wealth," "Culture," "Be-

havior," "Beauty," and "Illusions." In 1867, Harvard University, reversing its earlier judgment, gave him its blessing in the form of the honorary degree, Doctor of Laws, and elected him one of its Overseers. In the same year he published his last book of poems—*May Day*. At sixty-seven appeared his *Society and Solitude* with his essays on that subject and on "Civilization," "Art," "Eloquence," "Domestic Life," "Farming," "Works and Days," "Books," "Clubs," "Courage," "Success," and "Old Age."

Last Years. As his own old age drew near, it found him full of dignity and wisdom, and not without honor in his own country. An event occurred which crowned his life with the affections of his fellow citizens. Early one July morning in 1872 he and his wife had been awakened by the smoke of their burning home. In a few hours the house was a smoldering ruin. With the help of his neighbors Emerson had saved his beloved books and most of his manuscripts. Nevertheless the loss of the house threatened to reduce him in his declining years to the poverty of his childhood. Moreover, he had caught a cold from the exposure at the time of the fire, a fever had set in, and his old rheumatism had returned. The outlook was black. But his friends—many of them unknown to him—rallied. Quietly they let it be known that a fund was being raised. A few weeks after the disaster they presented him with their testimony of good will and hope—some $16,600. Delicately they told him that they "had formed an as-

sociation and were making him treasurer, and they wanted him to go to England and examine Warwick Castle and other noted houses that had been recently injured by fire, in order to get the best ideas possible for restoration and then apply them to a house which the association was formed to restore in this neighborhood." He tried to decline so generous a gift, but their persistent kindness was irresistible. He would not rest until he had learned the names of his benefactors, every one, "to repeat to myself at night and at morning."

Upon his return from the European trip in the Spring following the year of the fire, his neighbors, learning of the day of his expected arrival, rang the church bells and assembled the whole town at the station. They had arranged with the engineer of the train to signal with his whistle if Emerson were aboard. The whistle sounded "He's here!" and the people sent up their welcoming cheers. When Emerson appeared, he did not understand that all the joyful hubbub was for him; he thought it must be for his daughter Ellen who accompanied him. But the neighbors carried him home, the school children marching alongside; and when he passed under a triumphal arch at the entrance of his place and then came to his own door and found the house just as he had lived in it, "with hardly a trace of the injury, and his study just as it was before, with all the books there, and then saw the waiting throng of neighbors around the gate," he understood. He endeavored to speak. "My friends and neighbors! I

am not wood or stone. . . ." He got but little further; there was something in his throat.

Serenely, then, this resident of Concord and citizen of the universe settled down among his neighbors, surrounded by the tokens of their esteem and affection. As his faculties declined, he gave up lecturing and busied himself collecting from his earlier manuscripts the materials for yet one more book, *Letters and Social Aims,* which he published in 1875. His memory failed gradually until often he could not recall the names of familiar objects or the faces of his dearest friends. His mind remained alert and eager, and he occasionally tried to write; but his feebleness prevailed, and at last his faithful pen lay idle upon his desk, its long journey ended. On April 27, 1882, in his eightieth year, very peacefully he passed away.

His Widening Influence. But his words and the interpretation of life which they carried have not passed away. From that hour to this they have been traveling on with an ever-widening radius. They have been translated into every language of Europe and the Orient. He has more readers today than he had in his lifetime. And wherever he is read, whether with sympathy or doubt, horizons are lifted, and a fresh wind blows across the mind, quickening it to new life. "What is excellent, as God lives, is permanent."

Sources of His Power. In *Representative Men* Emerson makes the point that the men we call "great" are but magnified editions of ourselves. That is, they

have the same qualities as ordinary men but have some of them enlarged to an *n*th power. In this respect they represent us at our strongest or best. Thus Shakespeare is the magnified edition of the poet in every man, Plato of the philosopher, Montaigne of the skeptic, Napoleon of the man of ambition, and so on. In that sense Emerson is the representative of the pioneering American. Young citizens of the new world looked upon him as a magnified edition of themselves. They had Puritan ancestors, early struggles with poverty, impatience with old creeds and forms, faith in democracy, belief in a living God, and a determination to establish a freer and better world. Emerson had all these and on a vaster scale.

They had one or two or three generations of Puritan forebears; he had seven. They had learned a little about the Bible and Shakespeare and Milton and Locke; he knew them from cover to cover. They occasionally wrote down a few thoughts in letters or diaries; he kept a journal in which he jotted down meditations, aphorisms, and insights by the thousands. They made friends with Tom, Dick, and Harry; he made friends with Tom, Dick, and Harry, too—and also with Carlyle, Holmes, Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Hoar, Lowell, James, and Channing. They suffered ill-health and poverty; he endured both and conquered in spite of them. They admired self-discipline; he exemplified it. They made little excursions into the inner life; he explored it. They murmured against the

outworn forms of religion; he spoke out boldly against them. They felt within them the stirring of a creative energy; he yielded himself to its leading. They groped for new light; he found it. They extended their influence to the circle of their communities; he pushed his to the rim of the world.

No wonder he had power among them! He was their "man against the sky."

GEORGE FOX

1624-1691

WHY INCLUDE a jailbird and a pacifist among men of power? Because George Fox, jailbird and pacifist, is an example of what one man, in spite of jails, can do to oppose what he thinks wrong and to bring peace to suffering humanity. "I was never in prison," he once said, "but it was the means of bringing multitudes out of their prisons." A man who could be brought out of a stinking prison into the presence of Cromwell, virtual dictator of England, refuse to doff his hat, preach the ways of peace to that militant ruler, advise him to decline a crown, and yet win Cromwell's respect and affection must have had power somewhere inside of him. We may not agree with his opinions; we may not like his methods; we may be repelled by his self-righteousness; but we cannot deny that he made a deep dent in the history of the world.

He was a prophet of spiritual religion. In his own life he demonstrated that religion in action. He belongs in the succession of such original religious seers

as Amos, Hosea, Francis of Assisi, Joan of Arc, and John Wesley—all widely different in personality and method, but having in common a conviction that the ultimate authority of religion rests upon a vital inner experience rather than upon conformity to church or Bible or creed. Around this conviction Fox organized the Society of Friends. He upheld this conviction in the face of a hostile world. When his inner experience led him to espouse pacificism, he did so with an adamantine courage that commanded the admiration of those who tried vainly to break him by force.

The power of his life and thought has influenced profoundly nearly every great religious and social reformer of the past three hundred years. Carlyle wrote (in *Sartor Resartus*) that Fox was "one of those persons to whom, under ruder or purer form, the Divine Idea of the Universe is pleased to manifest itself," and concluded that he was the "greatest of the moderns." Emerson, who read Fox diligently and sympathetically, declared, "I believe I am more of a Quaker than anything else. I believe in the still small voice, and that voice is Christ within us." William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience,* said that it was impossible to overpraise the Quaker religion which Fox founded, for it was "a religion of veracity, rooted in spiritual inwardness, and a return to something more like the original gospel truth than men had ever known in England."

England in the Seventeenth Century. At the time of

his birth and throughout his life England was a boiling pot. Four years before he was born British Independents seeking religious and political liberty had chartered the "Mayflower" and crossed the ocean to America. When Fox was eighteen years old, civil war rent England asunder. A few years later Oliver Cromwell, at the head of his army of hymn-singing soldiers, became the country's ruler. Through the bloody years of the Protectorate and the Restoration Fox was going up and down the country proclaiming peace by a different method.

The civil and political strife of these years sprang largely from a century of religious conflicts. Ever since Henry VIII had broken with the Pope over the question of divorce, the country had suffered from dissension between Catholics and Protestants. Elizabeth's policy of compromise after her accession in 1558 had brought temporary peace among the warring factions, but no great religious leader had arisen to do for religion what Shakespeare was doing for literature. England lagged far behind the continent in her reformation. Erasmus and Luther and many others had lit their torches on the continent and passed on. Their light flamed in the distance across the channel. Some beams of it in the early part of Elizabeth's reign entered the minds of a group of people who called themselves Puritans. The Puritans felt that Elizabeth's compromises were only temporizing reforms. They

wanted a more thorough purification, and their movement for it grew apace.

Warring Religious Factions. By 1603, when James I came to the throne, most of the people of England were in one or another of the following religious factions:

The Roman Catholics, commonly called Papists, yielding their supreme authority in matters of religion to the Pope.

The Anglicans, or members of the Church of England. They had broken with the Pope and given their allegiance to the English crown. Their church was supported by the state and therefore known as "The Established Church."

The Puritans, who wanted to purge both state and church of corruption, vice, and drunkenness, but did not want to separate the church from the state. They were Calvinists in theology and emphasized the theory of human depravity from which only the grace of God could redeem men. The Puritans included the Presbyterians and various smaller sects which held this theology.

The Independents (Congregationalists), who were like the Puritans in most respects, but insisted on separation of church and state.

The Baptists, who introduced the idea of making baptism an act of will on the part of the baptized person. Like the Independents, they wanted a clear sepa-

ration of church and state and believed in lay preachers rather than a "hired" clergy.

The Seekers, a sect of mystics who waited in silence for the voice of the Lord. They believed that no true church existed or ever had. They held that men could be taught little by books but much by the inner spirit. From these Fox was to receive much of his inspiration, although he originally belonged to the Presbyterian group.

The Ranters, a noisy group who believed that after they had accepted the gospel God was in them to such an extent that they could do no wrong.

The Fifth Monarchists, who held that four empires had fallen—the Assyrian, Persian, Greek, and Roman —and that it now remained for Christ to install himself at the head of the fifth and final monarchy.

With each of these sects insecurely established, and at least half of them wanting their churches to be supported by taxation, the confusion was intense. The one thing they all agreed upon was that they wanted radical changes in both religion and politics—but they could not agree upon the nature of the changes or how to effect them.

The King James Bible. A year after James I ascended the throne he summoned a conference to consider the complaints of the Puritans. Among other things, these Puritans objected that the Bible then in use in the Church of England and elsewhere was a "most corrupted translation." Their spokesman in

presenting this matter was Dr. Reynolds, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He evidently convinced the monarch and his counselors, for shortly thereafter James appointed a notable group of scholars and committed to them a great task. It was not, as commonly supposed, the task of making an entirely new translation. It was the task of making a new version by choosing the more accurately translated portions of the various versions then in existence. James and his counselors had the fond but vain hope that when this revision would be printed and come into the general possession of the people, religious differences would vanish. The scholars completed their work in five or six years, and in 1611 the revised Bible, known as the King James Version, came from the presses. It was eagerly taken up and read everywhere. England almost at once became a nation of one book, and its most popular diversion was for a time amateur theology. But having one book did not mean that the people would agree upon its interpretation. Each sect pounced upon it to find justification for its own doctrines. Wider grew the divisions and more bitter the sectarianism. The great question became, What is the final authority? "The Church," insisted the Catholics. "The Bible," contended the Protestants. George Fox was to give yet another answer.

Charles I ascended the throne in 1625. By that time the situation had become so intolerable that some of the Puritans had left England and were now on the shores

of America. Charles tried to crush the Puritan movement with the inevitable result: it prospered the more. His efforts only led to the outbreak of civil war in 1642 and the loss of his own head in 1649. By this time most of the various religious sects had joined with the Puritans in their effort to purge the country of political abuse and religious tyranny.[1]

His Home and School. Into these times George Fox was born at Fenny-Drayton, a hamlet of the midlands of England, in 1624. His home was neither well-to-do nor poor. Of his parents he writes in his autobiography:

My father's name was Christopher Fox; he was by profession a weaver, an honest man; and there was a Seed of God in him. The neighbors called him righteous Christopher. My mother was an upright woman; her maiden name was Mary Lago, of the family of the Lagos, and of the stock of the martyrs.

Whenever Fox mentions his mother in his journals, the reference is affectionate. He gives also this testimony to the moral quality of his home:

In my very young years I had a gravity and stayedness of mind and spirit not usual in children. . . . When I came to eleven years of age I knew pureness and righteousness; for while a child I was taught how to walk to be kept pure.

[1] For a somewhat fuller description of the times see the sketches on Cromwell and Milton in Volume II of this series.

Rufus Jones, his great biographer, who seems to walk with Fox as a brother, describes the home where Fox was reared:

> The home, like that of Martin Luther, was penetrated with an atmosphere of pure and undefiled religion. Sobriety and simplicity, honesty and honour, sincerity and truth, reverence and respect, were incarnated in the lives of these two persons who brought forth and nurtured this child that was destined to be a religious prophet and reformer.[2]

The community was an isolated one. Only rarely did anyone come to Fenny-Drayton from the outside bringing fresh truth. But all serious people in the community were reading the new King James Bible. There were many long evenings and Sundays when it was read in the Fox home with the boy George silently and intently listening, taking the words into his heart.

Almost nothing is known of young George's education outside his home except that it was very meager. The Bible and the example of his father and mother were all that he had. Fox was never to be a scholar. He was early put to work in the fields.

Apprenticed to a Shoemaker. Some of his relatives wanted him to become a minister. What else could such a serious-minded boy become? But in his *Great Journal* he says that others persuaded to the contrary, and that at the age of twelve he was apprenticed to a

[2] Rufus Jones, *George Fox, Seeker and Friend,* Harper and Brothers, New York, 1930, p. 9.

Nottingham shoemaker, who also dealt in cattle and wool. For six or seven years Fox worked for this man. He performed his tasks with diligence, became respected as a person of forthright honesty whose "yea" and "nay" meant just that. It became known that "if George says Verily, there is no altering him." He seems to have been very conscious of his own uprightness and to have felt the Lord's power was with him and over him to preserve him. Thus he could say that he never wronged man or woman in that time. With a touch of unconscious humor he concludes his account of his relations with the shoemaker: "A great deal [of business] went through my hands. While I was with him he was blessed, but after I left him he broke and came to nothing." While apprenticed to this shoemaker Fox made himself a suit of leather which he wore nearly all the rest of his life.

Apostasy of the Church. As the boy grew older, he became more and more conscious of the religious corruption of the time. He perceived that churches were engaged in seeking privileges for themselves rather than in looking for opportunities to serve the poor. This he felt was true, not only of Catholicism and of the Established Church, but of the Presbyterians as well. He came to the conviction that the clergy, or "priests," were courting mammon. He saw in the church buildings, or "steeplehouses," as he called them, the shrines of time-serving, insincere persons who were Christians in name only.

A Mental Crisis. One day when he was about nineteen, all this which he had been pondering came to a climax in an experience which marked the turning point in his life. He had gone to a local fair in a near-by town. He met there two men, one of them his cousin and both professing Christians. They took him to an inn where they drank much and urged him to do likewise. When George refused to drink to excess, they tried to make him pay for what they had had. He put down a small piece of money and went home, leaving them alone. Rufus Jones describes the effect of this experience upon Fox:

It seemed to him only a vivid illustration of the way everybody was doing. The world seemed twisted and out of joint. People said one thing and did another. Religion looked like a shallow sham, a thing for show, and not for daily practice. Poor, honest-hearted, pure-minded George Fox could not stand the discovery. It crushed his soul and broke his spirit. He could not sleep. He could not eat. He moaned and cried and wandered about alone, trying to understand the strange wilderness world he was in. At length he decided to leave his home—it seemed to him God sent him out—and to go up and down the land seeking for light and endeavoring to find some help for his disturbed soul. He went out into the mysterious world not knowing whither he went, but resolved to see if he could discover anywhere any *real religion which made people's lives right, and gave them power to live by.*[3]

[3] Rufus Jones, *The Story of George Fox,* The Macmillan Co., New York, 1919, p. 9.

We need not follow him in his travels. They took him to villages, towns, and to the great cities including London. Everywhere the "priests" (Fox called everyone a "priest" who formally conducted worship) were the same, "blind guides and empty hollow casks." They recommended to him everything from tobacco to marriage, but none gave him the answer he sought. He suffered intensely in the depths of his soul. For three years he wandered about England trying to find someone who could "speak to his condition"—could give him the key that would unlock the mystery of the relation of religion to life.

His First Opening. Then finally his mind cleared. He had what he called "an opening"—one of many that were to follow. The psychological or psychopathic nature of these "openings" we cannot go into here. Probably they were of the same general character as the visions of other great religious mystics—the "voices" that came to Socrates, the blinding light to Paul, the crucifix that spoke to Francis of Assisi, the divine calls that came to Savonarola and to Joan of Arc. A long dark period of turmoil is suddenly followed by a dawn of understanding. Exhausting struggles among the dangerous rocks of the mountainside bring the weary and lonely pilgrim to the summit where he sees the world spread out clearly at his feet. Thus it was with Fox. Out of his months of spiritual wrestling came suddenly the conviction that Christ spoke directly to him saying, "There is a living God who made

all things." Something in him responded to that voice. "My cloud vanished away," he wrote, "and life rose over it all; my heart was glad and I praised the living God. . . . All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell." This something in him that responded to the divine call he termed variously "the seed" and "that of God" and "the Holy Spirit." Throughout his life he had, every now and then, such "openings." Responding to them he grew steadily in power.

His Purpose. This communion with Christ came without priestly mediation for him, and he held that it must be so for others. Thenceforth he would listen to this divine voice rather than to external authority of either church or Bible, and he would persuade others to do likewise. By word and example "he asked people to stop arguing about Christ and to turn their attention to the light of Christ in their own souls, to sit still and listen and let God's grace and power work within them." [4] Without stint he gave his life to this task of bringing people to a sincere and profound religion based on an inner experience rather than on external authority. In his own words:

I was sent of the Lord God of heaven and earth to preach freely and to bring people off from these outward temples made with hands, which God dwelleth not in; that they might know their bodies become the temples of God and of Christ; and to draw people off

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

from all their superstitious ceremonies, Jewish and heathenish customs, traditions, and doctrines of men; and from all the world's hireling teachers, that take tithes and great wages, preaching for hire, and divining for money, whom God and Christ never sent, as themselves confess when they say that they never heard God's nor Christ's voice. I exhorted the people to come off from all these things, directing them to the Spirit and Grace of God in themselves, and to the Light of Jesus in their own hearts; that they might come to know Christ, their free teacher, to bring them salvation, and to open the scriptures to them.

Fox, of course, was not the first to proclaim the inner light as a source of guidance. A hundred and fifty years earlier in the time of Luther, Thomas Münzer had held it as the essential principle of a reformed Christianity. After him Sebastian Franck (1499-1542) preached the same idea. Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) had written much and persuasively on the subject. His books had been translated into English and were circulating when George Fox was coming to manhood. Fox may have heard of them or come in contact with some of Boehme's followers. The thing that set Fox apart from his predecessors was that he *incarnated the idea in his own life* and made it the organizing principle of an expanding group.

His Appearance. Picture him then in his leather suit and the broad hat he always wore, his strong body, his piercing eyes, and his powerful voice, going out to preach this message to any and all who would hear. He

traveled from town to town, working at his shoemaker's trade as he had opportunity, and sleeping in the open or in the homes of people who made a practice of housing itinerant religious men. He came to know England of the seventeenth century more intimately than any other man of his day; for he traveled not only on the main highways, but along the country lanes, meeting all types of people in cities, towns, villages, and open country. As he himself said, "It is necessary that I know all conditions that I may speak to all conditions."

As long as he addressed people in the open air or in private homes, he met with no more resistance than any other itinerant preacher of the day, and there were hundreds of them. But there was a great difference between him and the other itinerant preachers. They spoke almost entirely in terms of argument and doctrine; he in terms of practice. "Get the shams out of your lives," he would cry. "Live differently and act differently from the way people in general live and act." He cared more about being and doing than about theological disputations. But he did not confine his preaching to the open air or to private homes. He went into the churches, on at least one occasion interrupting a service, and called priests and parishioners to repentance and to a new way of life. He describes one such adventure:

Now as I went toward Nottingham, on a Firstday, in the morning, going with Friends to a meeting there,

when I came on top of a hill in sight of the town, I espied a great steeple-house. And the Lord said unto me, "Thou must go cry against yonder great idol, and against the worshippers therein."

He goes on to relate how, joining the worshipers, he was moved to protest against the interpretation which the minister gave to the scriptures and to suggest the Holy Spirit rather than a Holy Book as the true basis for religious authority. The conclusion of this episode was swift: "As I spoke amongst them, the officers came and took me away and put me into a nasty, stinking prison; the smell whereof so got into my nose and throat that it very much annoyed me."

Early Followers. Such a man and such a message were bound to recruit followers. During the first four years of his preaching he had made little attempt at securing them. At Pendle Hill, however, came another great "opening." His heart had been heavy with discouragement. He was physically hungry. There, on the top of Pendle Hill, "the Lord let me see in what places He had a great people to be gathered." Later the same day, in another vision, "the Lord opened unto me and let me see a great people in white raiment by a riverside coming to the Lord, and the place I saw them in was about Wensleydale and Sedbergh." Fox set out for that region. He found the group which called themselves "Seekers." On the following Sunday, after a period of intense silence, Fox arose and spoke to them for three hours. Many of the thou-

sands who had gathered for that meeting felt that their seeking was over. They were now finders. They were the nucleus of the Society of Friends, and they hailed Fox as their leader.

One of the homes into which Fox had been invited to speak was Swarthmore Hall, the estate of Judge Fell. Fox had arrived and begun his preaching during the judge's absence. Many of his hearers were convinced, including his hostess, Margaret, the judge's young wife. When Judge Fell returned, a delegation of local ministers poured into his ears a tale of woe against Fox and his teachings. The judge, although deeply disturbed, refused to take action until he had heard both sides. That evening he heard Fox speak for himself. Fox omitted the usual formal compliments and spoke straight from the shoulder. The judge said little. He went to bed "very quiet," but "he clearly saw the truth." The next morning the local minister endeavored again to persuade the judge against Fox, but in vain. The conquest of Swarthmore Hall had been made. Although the judge did not accept the faith, he offered the use of his house as a place for meetings, and it became a sort of headquarters for the young movement with Mrs. Fell one of its ablest leaders. Fell himself became a staunch friend of Fox and often helped him in his many clashes with the law.

In this region Fox gathered about himself a band of young men who had become "convinced" and sent them out as volunteer preachers. Most of these had belonged

to this sect called "Seekers." Many were Oxford graduates. Some were to become famous, notably Howgill, Burroughs, and Audland. It is significant that these earliest followers were called "Friends." Recounting the early history of his followers Fox afterward wrote:

When people came to have experience of Friends' honesty and faithfulness, and found that their yea was yea and their nay was nay; that they kept their word in their dealings, and would not cozen and cheat, but that if a child were sent to their shops for anything he was as well used as his parents would have been—then the lives and conversation of Friends did preach and reached to the witness of God in people.

One preaching tour took Fox to the community from which the Pilgrim fathers had come. The great Quaker, Richard Farnsworth, and several others were the harvest of this tour. On another he won to his cause two ex-soldiers, William Dewsbury and James Nayler, who were to cause him much trouble by their excesses. Thus the movement grew.

Opposition and Persecution. But as it grew, it met the bitterest opposition that the inhumanity of man could devise. The attack upon Fox came from three sources: the people, the churches, and the civil authorities.

The people who attacked him were those who objected to being told that they were not good enough or who had been stirred to fury by the false accusations

of his enemies, men whose profits had been endangered by the way of life he taught. At the village of Mansfield Woodhouse, soon after he had started on his mission, "the people fell upon me in a great rage [he wrote in his journal], struck me down and almost stifled and smothered me: and I was cruelly beaten and bruised by them with their hands, Bibles, and sticks." Then, when he was hardly able to stand, they put him in the stocks and later stoned him out of town. But, he added, "the Lord's power soon healed me again. That day some people were convinced of the Lord's truth and turned to his teaching." At another place the clerk of a church, incensed by Fox's preaching, suddenly took up a Bible and struck him on the face with it so that the blood gushed forth and he "bled exceedingly in the steeplehouse." But that was only the beginning. The crowd rushed him outside, beat him, and threw him over a hedge into the street. Then they dragged him through the street stoning him the while. Covered with blood and dirt he finally got to his feet and "declared the word of life to them."

His journal records an even more appalling piece of persecution at the hands of a mob on an island off the Lancashire coast, near Furness. He was but twenty-eight years of age at the time.

As soon as I had come to land, there rushed out about forty men with staves, clubs, and fishing poles, who fell upon me, beating and punching me, and endeavoring to thrust me backward into the sea. . . . They knocked me

down and stunned me. When I came to myself, I looked up and saw James Lancaster's wife throwing stones at my face, and her husband . . . was lying over me, to keep the blows and stones off me. For the people had persuaded James Lancaster's wife that I had bewitched her husband, and had promised her they would put me to death. . . . At length I got up on my feet, but they beat me down again into the boat; which James Lancaster observing, he presently came into it, and set me over the water from them; but while we were on the water within their reach, they struck at us with long poles and threw stones at us. . . . When I was come over to the town again, on the other side of the water, the townsmen rose up with pitchforks, flails, and staves, to keep me out of the town, crying, "Kill him, knock him on the head, bring the cart, and carry him away to the churchyard." So after they had abused me, they drove me some distance out of town, and there left me.

In time this persecution by individuals and mobs died down as the people came to see that Fox was really their friend.

The antagonism of the churches, however, did not relax. When he attempted to speak in the Established Church at York Minster, after the "priest" had concluded the service, he met with a stern reception. He told the congregation that the Lord "looked for fruits from their lives and not pious words." Whereupon he was hustled out of the church and thrown down the steps. Near Swarthmore Hall the Puritan ministers banded together against this "mad preacher" who was stealing away their congregations. Stirring up some

of their members they attacked Fox and his followers at Ulverston. Fox, refusing to meet violence with violence, was beaten terribly; but, after he regained consciousness, he felt moved to walk again through the town. A soldier said to him, "Sir, I see you are a *man!*" Fox replied that the Lord's power was over all.

In general, Fox found himself in conflict with the Puritans because of their Calvinistic doctrine of human depravity and their dependence upon the strong arm of the state; with the Established Church because of its corruption and moral impotence; with the Papists because of their theory of external authority; and with the Ranters and other sects of similar nature because they felt themselves above moral obligation. He did not seek argument, but once involved in it he never pulled his punches. Few "priests" had temerity to cross verbal swords with him. It was much easier to give him a physical beating, for they knew Fox would not use force.

The cruelest of his persecutions came from the civil authorities, and they continued throughout his life. The charges brought against him in the courts were for refusing to take the oath, wearing his hat in court, and refusing to pay tithes to support the Established Church. To do any of these things he held would be inconsistent with his intention to follow Christ literally. Christ had said: "Swear not at all . . . but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." Therefore Fox

would not swear an oath, even an oath of allegiance to the government. His religion also required that he be not discriminating in his respect for persons; therefore, he would not take off his hat to anyone or in any place. And since he regarded the priests of the church as "hirelings" and not true shepherds, he would not consent to pay tithes for their support. Had he unbent even a little in these matters, he could have saved himself much suffering—but there was no bending or compromising in his make-up. Doubtless he often mistook his rigidity for his religion. Many of the charges preferred against him, however, were utterly baseless—for instance, that he was a "blasphemer, heretic, and seducer." At one time he was arrested for plotting against the Cromwellian government and seeking to restore the Stuarts. He was imprisoned "for safekeeping." At another time some soldiers of the Commonwealth tried to get him to join the army, promising to make him a captain. They knew his wide influence among the people; and since they were psalm-singers themselves, they did not realize that his religious views precluded his having anything to do with war. They soon found out. He told them that all wars arose from lusts and that as a Christian his purpose was to live in the "virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars." This so "got their rage up" that they put him into a "lousy stinking place without any bed, amongst thirty felons," where he was confined for nearly six months.

Years in Prison. In all, Fox was arrested sixty times. Eight times he was sentenced to prison. He spent more than six years within the walls of some of the most horrible prisons ever known. Since so much of his mature life was lived in these places, it may be well to indicate something of their nature. The vilest of holes in those days served for incarceration. Prisoners were thrown together without any regard for the nature of their offense or for their age or sex or mental condition. Punishment for all offences was uniform in character and varied only in degree.

Let Fox describe in his own words two of his eight prison experiences. Concerning his surroundings in the Carlisle prison (to which he had been sentenced for blasphemy, having declared that Christ was in him) he wrote:

> The jailer put me down into the prison amongst the moss-troopers [freebooters], thieves, and murderers. A filthy, nasty place it was, where women and men were together in a very uncivil manner, and never a house of office [toilet] in it; and the prisoners were so lousy that one woman was almost eaten to death with lice. Yet bad as the place was, the prisoners were all made very loving and subject to me, and some of them were convinced of the Truth. . . .

He was sentenced to Launceton Castle prison for eight months at the instigation of a military representative who charged that Fox had "spread several papers tending to the disturbance of the public peace." (The

papers were nothing more disturbing than an address Fox had written to the seven parishes of Land's End, but this was enough to arouse the suspicion of a military mind. Any itinerant preacher posting a notice was a "dangerous person.") The charge had not been proven in court, but Fox had been fined for contempt for not removing his hat and sentenced to prison until the fine should be paid. Refusing to pay either the fine or the jailer's fees for his care, since he was innocent, Fox suffered a fearful penalty. The jailer cast him into the prison's dungeon known as Doomsdale, a hellhole where murderers were sent after they had been condemned. Here is Fox's description of it:

The place was so noisome that it was observed that few that went in did ever come out again in health. There was no house of office in it; and the excrement of the prisoners that from time to time had been put there had not been carried out (as we were told) for many years. So that it was all like mire, and in some places to the tops of the shoes in water and urine: and he would not let us cleanse it, nor suffer us to have beds or straw to lie on.

At night some friendly people of the town brought us a candle and a little straw; and we burned a little of our straw to take away the stink. The thieves lay over our heads, and the head jailer in a room by them. . . . It seems the smoke went up into the room where the jailer lay; which put him into such a rage that he took the pots of excrement from the thieves and poured them through a hole upon our heads in Doomsdale, till we were so bespattered that we could not touch ourselves

nor one another. And the stink increased upon us; so that what with stink and what with smoke, we were almost choked and smothered. Moreover, he railed at us most hideously. . . . In this manner we were obliged to stand all night, for we could not sit down, the place was so full of filthy excrement.

A great while he kept us after this manner before he would let us cleanse it, or suffer us to have victuals brought in but what we got through the grate. . . . The head jailer, we were informed, had been a thief, and was burnt [branded] in the hand and in the shoulder; his wife, too, had been burnt in the hand. . . . Colonel Bennet, a Baptist teacher, having purchased the jail and lands belonging to the castle, had placed this head jailer there. The prisoners and some wild people would be talking of the spirits that haunted Doomsdale, and how many had died in it, thinking perhaps to terrify us therewith. But I told them that if all the spirits and devils in hell were there, I was over them in the power of God, and feared no such thing. . . .

And indeed my imprisonment there was of the Lord, and for His service in those parts; for after the assizes were over, and it was known that we were likely to continue prisoners, several Friends from many parts of the country came to visit us. Those parts of the west were very dark countries at that time; but the Lord's light and truth broke forth, shone over all, and many were turned from darkness to light. . . .

That dungeon still stands, now a ruin, and today the visitor may read upon its walls Fox's brave words, "I was never in prison that it was not a means of bringing multitudes out of their prisons." That was literally

true, for when Fox described with his forceful pen the conditions which prevailed, and their effects upon the prisoners, and saw to it that those descriptions reached the ears of Cromwell, prison reform followed. Moreover, as the news of his sufferings spread through the country, Friends took up his cause and brought a persistent pressure to bear on the authorities—a pressure designed not only to secure the release of their leader and alleviation of prison cruelties for all, but to make them open their hearts to the light of the gospel. One man, Humphrey Norton, went to Oliver Cromwell while Fox was at Doomsdale and pled that he be allowed to take Fox's place and even to die for him. Cromwell, deeply moved, turned to his Council and asked, "Which of you would do so much for me if I were in the same condition?"

Nearly ten years after the Doomsdale experience, and after several minor imprisonments, Fox was sentenced to Scarborough Castle, owned by a certain Sir Jordan Crosslands. When he entered it in 1665, he was so weak from a previous prison term that he could hardly stand upon his feet. Yet for sixteen months he survived in an open, unprotected room that faced the North Sea. The wind here drove in the rain so forcibly that the water came over his bed and ran about the room so that he had to skim it up with a platter. When his clothes were wet, he had no fire by which to dry them, so that his body was benumbed with cold and his fingers swollen with it. Yet when he was released,

he had won the friendship of Sir Jordan and the undying respect of his jailers, who said, "He was as stiff as a tree and as pure as a bell, for we could never bend him." He was forty-two years old, with twenty-four years yet to live, and the greater part of his work yet to do, for the divine fire still burned within him. No prison damp was ever able to quench it.

Why was Fox imprisoned so much? Why should any man go to jail for preaching the gospel as he understood it? One might as well ask why Socrates was given the hemlock, or Jesus hung on a cross, or Savonarola and Joan of Arc burned at the stake. They were all disturbers of the peace. They all challenged the existing social order. And they all had to pay the penalty of disturbers and challengers.

How He Used His Imprisonments. Fox turned his prison terms and his frequent clashes with the civil authorities to good account. He not only wrote letters urging prison reform, but he composed his journals—eight volumes—in the long months in jail; and they are among the most exciting adventure records in the English language. He made converts of fellow prisoners and occasionally even of jailers. Often when people came to see him, and he talked with them, they went away "convinced" not only of his courage but of the inner power which was its source. One such visitor was a youth of sixteen, James Parnell. This young man soon became a most effective preacher, especially among Cambridge students, and made many converts.

He was put by the cruel jailer into a hole in the castle wall, called the oven, so high from the ground that he went up to it by a ladder, which being six feet too short, he was obliged to climb from the ladder to the hole by a rope that was fastened above. When Friends would have given him a cord and a basket in which to draw up his victuals, the inhuman jailer would not suffer them. . . . At length his (Parnell's) limbs became much benumbed with lying in that place; yet being still obliged to go down to take up some victuals, as he came up the ladder again with his victuals in one hand, and caught at the rope with the other, he missed the rope, and fell down from a very great height upon the stones; by which fall he was so wounded in the head, arms, and body, that he died a short time after.

Perhaps the greatest use Fox made of his periods of imprisonment was to think out his own deepening purpose and the pattern of his life in the years ahead. His followers had increased rapidly in numbers, and he realized that numbers made organization necessary. So he thought out a new kind of organization—one in which the spirit would always dominate the form; in fact, one in which there would be a minimum of form and a maximum of spirit. Of this organization—or rather, fellowship—the Society of Friends—we shall speak later.

Whether planned or spontaneous, his method of conducting himself in his numerous clashes with the civil authorities marks Fox as one of the great religious geniuses of all time. He made every courtroom a

sounding board for his gospel, every persecution an advertisement of the power of faith to conquer it. When soldiers dragged him through the streets, he preached his gospel of peace to the crowds that followed. Once when five Friends, including Fox, were being transferred from one jail to another and would have been allowed to go unguarded (such confidence had the officers come to have in their integrity), he insisted on having a guard, probably because he knew that the presence of such a visible arm of the law would attract more of an audience than a few Friends alone.

At last they hired a poor labouring man [as guard] who was loth to go, though hired. So we rode to Leicester, being five in number; some carried their Bibles open in their hands, declaring Truth to the people as we rode in the fields and through the towns, and telling them that we were prisoners of the Lord Jesus Christ, going to suffer bonds for his name and Truth. One woman Friend carried her wheel in her lap to spin on in prison; and the people were mightily affected.

He feared no judge. They were servants of the State; he was servant of the Lord. When he stood before Judge Bennet, he warned that magistrate that the time had come when he and all people should tremble before the Lord. "So you are a *quaker,*" said the judge. The name stuck.[5]

[5] The name "quaker" had earlier been given in derision to the members of a continental ecstatic cult who were said to "swell, shiver, and shake" in the course of their religious ecstacies. Possibly Judge Bennet had heard of this sect. At any rate, he used the word "quaker" as one of opprobrium.

Fox's native sense of drama found full scope for its development in these court scenes. He dramatized himself, his cause, and the conflicts in the religious and political life of the nation. While most of it was in terms of heroic tragedy, the comic element sometimes entered. For example, once when he was in jail, he addressed a paper "against swearing" to the grand and petit juries.

This paper passing among them from the jury to the justices, they presented it to the Judge; so that when we were called before the Judge, he bade the clerk give me that paper, and then asked me whether that seditious paper were mine. I said to him, "If they will read it out in open court, that I may hear it, if it is mine I will own it, and stand by it." He would have had me take it and look upon it in my own hand; but again I desired that it might be read, that all the country might hear it, and judge whether there was any sedition in it or not; for if there were, I was willing to suffer for it.

At last the clerk of assize read it, with an audible voice, that all the people might hear it. When he had done I told them it was my paper; that I would own it, and so might they, too, unless they would deny the Scripture. . . .

Then they let fall that subject: and the Judge fell upon us about our hats again, bidding the jailer take them off; which he did, and gave them to us; and we put them on again. . . .

Fox relates another incident, some years later, in the court of Judge Twisden, which must have caused some

merriment among the spectators. When brought into the courtroom, Fox said, "Peace be amongst you all."

The Judge looked upon me and said, "What! Do you come into the court with your hat on!" Upon which words the jailer taking it off, I said, "The hat is not the honor that comes from God." Then said the Judge to me, "Will you take the oath of allegiance, George Fox?" I said, "I never took an oath in my life, nor any covenant or engagement." "Well," said he, "will you swear or no?" I answered, "I am a Christian, and Christ commands me not to swear; so does the apostle James; and whether I should obey God or man, do thou judge. . . .

Fox then argued that King Charles had promised that no man should be called in question for matters of religion so long as he lived peaceably.

"Why dost thou call me in question, and put me upon taking an oath, which is a matter of religion; seeing that neither thou nor anyone else can charge me with unpeaceable living?" Upon this he was moved, and, looking angrily at me, said, "Sirrah, will you swear?"

I told him I was not of his Sirrahs; I was a Christian; and for him, an old man and a judge, to sit there and give nicknames to prisoners did not become either his gray hairs or his office.

"Well," said he, "I am a Christian, too."

"Then do Christian works," said I.

"Sirrah!" said he, "thou thinkest to frighten me with thy words." Then, catching himself, and looking aside, he said, "Hark! I am using the word sirrah again";

and so checked himself. . . . Then he roused himself up, and said, "I will not be afraid of thee, George Fox; thou speakest so loud thy voice drowns mine and the court's; I must call for three or four criers to drown thy voice; thou hast good lungs."

"I am a prisoner here," said I, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. . . . If my voice were five times louder, I should lift it up and sound it for Christ's sake. I stand this day before your judgment-seat in obedience to Christ; before whose judgment-seat you must all be brought and must give an account."

Fox and Cromwell. Inevitably such a forceful leader must come face to face with the other great leader of his times—Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector. Both were deeply religious men, differing radically only in their methods of attaining their ends. Cromwell sought his through political and military force; Fox sought his through peaceful persuasion. Their first meeting (one of several) came when Fox was thirty years old and Cromwell fifty-five (1654). Fox had been arrested, charged with having taken part in a plot to take up arms against the government and to aid in the restoration of the Stuarts. Interested in the strange man, Cromwell had him brought into his presence. "Peace be to this house!" said Fox, as he entered the room from which peace had long since fled. Standing there with his hat on, facing the man before whom everybody else uncovered, or bowed, or kneeled, there was that in his carriage which indicated no disrespect—only a sense of dignity. Cromwell made no fuss about the hat but re-

ceived him kindly. He accepted Fox's statement that the latter had not plotted against the government. Then they settled down for a long and characteristically blunt and candid talk about religious matters. Fox blamed Cromwell for not safeguarding freedom of conscience among his people. Cromwell blamed Fox for quarreling with the ministers of other sects and keeping sectarian strife boiling. Fox insisted that it was the ministers who started the quarrels. He went on to expound his views of the inner light, and to urge the Protector to hearken to God's voice and obey it, lest his heart be hardened. Several times Cromwell interrupted to say that Fox was speaking truly and that it "was very good." When the interview finally came to an end, Cromwell, with tears in his eyes, caught Fox's hand and said, "Come again to my house; for if thou and I were but an hour of a day together, we should be nearer one to another." As Fox left the house, a captain informed him that Cromwell had decreed that he was a free man and invited him to return and dine in the hall with the other gentlemen. "Tell the Protector," the stern and tactless Fox replied, "that I did not come here to eat his food or to drink his drink." Cromwell said afterward that more of Fox in himself would make him a better ruler. He sent out a letter urging magistrates to be more lenient in dealing with Quakers.

When Cromwell was being pressed to accept a crown, Fox felt moved to warn him. "I met him in the park and told him that they that would put upon him a crown

would take away his life . . . and I bid him mind the crown that was immortal, and he thanked me and bid me go to his house."

As the months passed, the paths of these two stalwarts diverged further and further—Cromwell toward compulsion to attain his righteous ends, Fox toward purely religious methods—until their friendship practically ceased.

The Society of Friends. All this opposition at the hands of the people, the churches, and the civil authorities Fox suffered in the company of his increasing number of followers. Nothing succeeds like persecution. In those days, as ever, the call to "come and suffer" was the most effective appeal to men and women of courage. In 1656, at the age of thirty-two, he wrote (the italics are mine):

> In this year the Lord's Truth was finely planted over the nation, and many thousands were turned to the Lord; *insomuch that there were seldom fewer than one thousand in prison in this nation for Truth's testimony;* some for tithes, some for going to steeple-houses, some for contempt of court, some for not swearing, and others for not putting off their hats.

Four years later there were 3,170 of their number in English jails. By the following year four had been hanged in Massachusetts. But persecution only multiplied them. In America the town of Oyster Bay on Long Island was originally given to six loyal subjects of the crown "on condition that no Quakers be allowed

to settle there." The Quakers promptly invaded the region, and by the end of another generation it was largely a Quaker community.

This growth in numbers made some form of organization necessary He wanted an organization, as we have already noted, that would have a minimum of institutionalism and a maximum of spirit. It must be flexible, simple, democratic—and always ready to receive an influx of the light of Truth. So, at the age of thirty-three, we find him beginning to travel up and down the land making clear this ideal to the various groups of Friends. To effect it they would have a Monthly Meeting, a more important Quarterly Meeting, and the great General Meeting. There was no voting. A secretary summed up "the sense of the meeting" after the members had spoken or there had been a period of silence. It was a kind of group mysticism with all the members *en rapport* with each other. Such an organization fitted his doctrine of a living, indwelling "something of God" in every individual. It was not an institution to be handed down intact, but rather a channel for living spirit which might need to take on new form to meet new needs of each succeeding generation. From then until now the Society of Friends has been just that—a society or fellowship of friendly people banded together to receive, through group silence or quiet-spoken word, the still small voice of the Spirit of God, and then to act according to its leading.

New Persecutions. The sufferings of the Friends

under the Cromwellian government, harsh as they were, seemed light compared with what they were called upon to endure under the Restoration government of the Stuarts. The Quaker Act of 1662 and the two Conventicle Acts of 1664 and 1670 "let loose a pitiless havoc" upon Fox and his followers. These acts made it unlawful to hold any meeting for religious purposes, and involving more than five persons, except such meetings as were held by the Established Church. Further, heavy penalties were prescribed for those who refused to take an oath—a provision aimed directly at the Quakers. Such laws tested the hearts of the strongest —and taxed the capacities of the English jails, for the Quakers met the test and refused to compromise their principles. Thousands also emigrated to America. Fox redoubled his efforts and went throughout the country and into Scotland organizing Meetings and encouraging the faithful.

Marriage to Margaret Fell. Through all these struggles he could always count on one human being who never failed him—Margaret Fell. She was the widow of Judge Fell of Swarthmore Hall. In 1669, eleven years after the death of the Judge, and after Fox had consulted not only her but her children as well, the two were married. Fox records the event in his journal:

But now being at Bristol, and finding Margaret Fell there, it opened in me from the Lord that the thing should be accomplished. After we had discussed the matter together, I told her that if she also was satisfied

with the accomplishing of it now, she should first send for her children; which she did. When the rest of her daughters were come, I asked both of them and her sons-in-law if they had anything against it, or for it; and they all severally expressed their satisfactions therein.

The wedding took place after the manner already established by the Society of Friends and without benefit of clergy. This consisted in the publication of the marriage banns (that is, the announcements of the approaching marriage) and then, after due time, both parties rising in a regular Meeting of the Friends to declare their affection for each other and their purpose of establishing a home. Fox imagined this to have been the form of marriage used by Adam and Eve! A judge in 1661 (without accepting the Adam and Eve argument, however) had accepted the form as valid, deciding that it is the consent of the parties that makes a marriage. The Quakers' sincerity in words spoken and the testimony of witnesses was considered sufficient to satisfy all other demands of the law. Although they were happily married for twenty-one years, Fox and Margaret lived together only five years; the rest of the time he spent in his travels over the country and in Holland, Germany, and America, looking after "the Seed," or in jail. He wrote her affectionate letters (couched in the religious terminology which had become a part of himself) addressing her as "Dear Heart." She, in turn, shouldered much

responsibility as a leader among the Friends. She knew first-hand their hardships, for she spent nearly five years in prison with them. She cared for Fox's wants during the last years of his life and was always one with him in purpose and spirit.

Meanwhile Fox carried on. He began to recruit and train a picked body of men who had been "convinced" and to send them out as lay preachers and evangelists to penetrate every section of Europe and America with their message. These included such illustrious names as Thomas Lower of Oxford (and his ardent young convert, William Penn), Robert Barclay, George Keith, and Alexander Jaffray of Scotland, Isaac Penington, Thomas Ellwood (John Milton's secretary, who suggested that he write "Paradise Regained"), George Whitehead, and Thomas Story.

Visit to America. The Society well started and flourishing in spite of—or because of—persecutions in England and on the Continent, Fox felt moved to visit "the Seed" in America. Accordingly, he and a small group of helpers took passage on a tiny boat bound westward across the Atlantic, about the middle of August, 1671. It was a long and hazardous voyage. The boat developed such leaks that crew and passengers had to man the pumps day and night. A Moorish pirate ship chased and almost caught them. Storms and shortage of food added to their discomfort. At length, however, they reached their destination; and Fox began at once a two-year series of meetings from Vir-

ginia to Rhode Island, traveling by horseback or on foot, through swamps and forests, and always rejoicing in the power of the Lord over all obstacles. Through an interpreter he spoke to the Indians, who, he said, "became tender and loving" and accepted his teaching. In Massachusetts he got into a series of debates with Roger Williams. Two books with amusing titles resulted. Williams entitled his *George Fox Digged Out of His Burrows.* Fox, with equal assurance, entitled his *The New England Firebrand Quenched.* This American visit, because of the great gatherings and the vast enthusiasm which accompanied Fox's preaching and that of his helpers, was one of the most important religious events in the colonies during the seventeenth century.

Social Work. Fox was a man of action. He wanted not only to hear God's will, but to get it done in human life here and now. Religion for him was a *way of living*—first getting the light, then following it. Having cast aside as false the Calvinistic theory of the depravity of human nature and embracing in its stead the faith that there is "something of God" in every human being, he took a most optimistic view of what man could do. He believed absolutely, as did St. Francis and Jesus, in the invincible power of faith and love. "Set man free from tyranny and oppression, liberate him from false theories of life, draw out his potentialities by true education, awaken him to a consciousness of God within him, and there are no limits to his spiritual possi-

bilities." Thus Rufus Jones sums up Fox's view of his fellow man.

In keeping with that idea he took a vital interest in the underprivileged everywhere. He treated Indians and Negroes as brothers and inferior to white only in education and opportunity. He did more than any man of his time for prison reform and to abolish capital punishment. He "had a concern" for toilers and their welfare. He spoke against wrong social conditions as thunderously as against individual sins. On one occasion, having missed the opportunity to speak to a meeting of some justices, he said that he was struck blind; and then, recovering his sight, he ran eight miles to a place where they were meeting the next day, and this to tell them to pay their servants a fair wage and to exhort the servants to serve faithfully and honestly. He exerted a powerful influence for temperance. He encouraged education and urged young people to study "everything civil and useful in the creation." Slavery, of course, he could not tolerate; and throughout the slave period of American history the Friends steadfastly refused to be slave-owners.

He hated war. Although his whole life was lived amid the fierce clashes of the Stuarts and the Commonwealth, and popular passions ran high and blood flowed freely, he preached against war with all his might and main. "War is wrong," he cried, "it is immoral, it is inhuman, and it shall not be! There is a spirit which conquers it, and I propose to incarnate that spirit and to

practice it and to call others to that way of life until we shall girdle the world with men and women who live in that life and power which does away with the occasion for all war!"

He first saw the fruits of this teaching in William Penn. Penn had become "convinced" in 1667 in face of the stern opposition of his father, an admiral in the British navy. Until then Penn wore a sword. The weapon began to trouble his mind, and he asked Fox concerning it. "Wear it as long as thou canst, friend William," replied Fox. Soon thereafter the sword was laid aside. Later, when Penn came to America, he established his colony among the Indians without the use of force. Today the Friends' labors for international peace and their far-flung social service command the respect and admiration of the world.

His Death. On January 10, 1691, Fox went to Gracechurch Street Meeting in London. He was an old man now, and worn out by his many prison terms, by the hardships of incessant travel, and by his heavy responsibilities for the new Society he had founded; but he still preached with fire. He finished what was to be his last sermon and knelt down to pray. After the prayer he told some friends that a cold seemed to strike at his heart. Three days later the end came peacefully. He pronounced his own benediction, saying, "Now I am clear, I am fully clear. . . . All is well; the Seed of God reigns over all and over death itself."

His Limitations and His Power. Every saint has a

seamy side to his nature, and Fox was no exception. He was often self-righteous, intolerant, tedious, and uninspired, which is all very human; but he failed to recognize it. He spoke with undue finality. He probably often mistook his own opinions for "openings" from the Lord. His exposition of Scripture would have been far more helpful had he disciplined himself in scholarship. He had an appalling stiffness of conscience and did not even need a molehill to make a mountain. Had he possessed more historical perspective, he would have realized that his idea was not wholly original and that he owed a debt to existing religious institutions, many of which had genuine worth even though they were so often in need of reform. But he apparently saw little good in religious movements other than his own. Moreover, his own charity sometimes failed when his persecutors met with misfortune, and he records the death of some of them with a self-righteous unction not far removed from glee.

In spite of these limitations, he had enormous power. In the Foreword of this volume the writer stated his purpose to *explain* these men. Fox is one who defies full explanation. Like the great religious leaders of all time he drew his ultimate strength from a spring which seems to have been revealed only to God's prophets. He once declared that God spoke to him as truly as he ever did to the prophets and apostles of old. Though we cannot draw the veil from the mys-

tery of his superior spirituality, we can trace some of the origins of his superior humanity. Those origins include the influence of his Puritan home with a father known as "righteous Christopher" and a mother who was "of the stock of the martyrs"; his powerful physique which withstood the bitter hardships of cold and hunger and disease in filthy prisons; his kindly face, piercing eyes, and stentorian voice; his magnetic personality which attracted respectful attention wherever he went; his struggle to victory through a psychic disturbance that nearly destroyed him; his religious purpose that grew out of this experience; his sense of constant communion with a divine power; his native dramatic ability; his demonstration in his daily living of a way of life that was Christlike in its downright sincerity, goodness, and courage; his faith in the power of love to conquer any obstacle; his belief in the divine potentialities in every man he met; and his friends, especially his wife, who followed and encouraged him.

Of all these we have spoken in the course of this sketch, but it may not be out of place to emphasize two of them: the example of his life and his religious convictions.

By the example of his life more than by what he said he won the admiration and affection of the multitudes to whom he preached. They knew that he took no money from his preaching; that he went about from place to place like the first disciples of Jesus, without purse or scrip, working with his hands at his trade or

trusting to devout people who heard him to supply his simple wants. When bed and food were not forthcoming, he slept in the fields and went hungry. But nothing could stop him. He thought of himself as bound in service to the great message he had to proclaim. His own comfort and security meant nothing; the proclamation of that message everything. At the time of his last imprisonment when he might easily have been released by pardon, he would not accept the pardon because, as he said, he had committed no offense to be pardoned for. "I would rather have lain in prison all my days than to have come out of it in any way dishonourable to Truth." His leather suit and his broad hat were no more his distinguishing marks than his bravery and his devotion to the right as he saw it. He was a cheerful man, for, as he so frequently said, he knew that "the Lord's power reigned over all." Whatever men did to his body, they could not destroy his inner peace, his hopefulness, his serenity. Even when an angry man with a naked rapier in his hand rushed at him to kill him, that serenity was not disturbed. "Alack for thee, poor creature," said Fox calmly, "what will thou do with thy carnal weapon? It is no more to me than a straw." His assailant turned and slunk away. William Penn summed up the impression Fox made upon those who knew him: "In all things he acquitted himself like a man, yea a strong man, a new and heavenly-minded man."

That heavenly-mindedness came in part at least from

his religious convictions. There was no burden of theology in Fox's religion. It was and is a way of life, not a system of philosophy or even of ethics. For him religion was the integrating force that bound together his quiet waiting for the voice of the Lord and his intense activity once he heard it. Deepest of his convictions was his unwavering belief in the presence of God in his own soul. He learned to listen to the promptings of that divine Presence. We have seen where it led him—how he stood before mighty men and spoke bluntly to them; how he denounced war; how he faced churches and called them to repentance; how he exposed hypocrisy and sham; and how he lived for years in jails and prisons and dungeons and used his imprisonment to plan the spread of his message still further when released. Wherever it led him, there was a light within him that glowed from his face and shed its rays into the darkest corners of men's lives.

Next to this conviction of the presence of God in his own soul was his faith that the same Presence dwelt in the soul of every other human being. This was his doctrine of the "Seed" or "that of God" in every man. Because men had it, he believed in them, hoped with them, had great expectations for them. He wanted men to allow this seed to grow and possess them utterly. When it possessed them, there would be no more war, or hatred, or injustice, or oppression. Men would live together as brothers. It might take centuries for all men to recognize this divine essence within them

and for the reign of peace to come. In the meantime, he cried—and his words still echo across a war-torn world—"One man raised by God's power to stand and live in the same spirit the prophets and apostles were in can shake the country for ten miles around!" Yes, and as Rufus Jones adds, "for ten thousand miles and three centuries." Fox in his own life demonstrated that power.

CHARLES DARWIN

1809-1882

CHARLES DARWIN changed the thinking of the world. Yet as a boy he was so long finding himself that his father despaired. Other young men who have tried to fit themselves for first one profession and then another; other parents who see their dreams for their children fade as the years pass and those children show no signs of setting the world afire, or even of kindling their own ambition—all such may read the story of Charles Darwin and take hope. For Darwin was not always a man of power. He was once a restless youngster who loved shooting and fishing and roaming the woods far more than he loved studies.

His story may also bring encouragement to those who have endured the handicap of ill-health; for although Darwin had a powerful frame, he was afflicted with an abdominal disease which sapped his strength and kept him in a never-ending struggle for his very life. It made him a recluse and incapacitated him for work much of the time. Toward the latter part of his career

he never passed twenty-four hours without many hours of pain when he could do nothing. Yet he managed to leave behind him a series of books and monographs totaling more than four hundred thousand words and of such force that our age of science is sometimes divided into two eras—pre-Darwinian and post-Darwinian.

His Ancestry. A study of his forebears gives one a new respect for the influence of heredity. For four generations botanists had been appearing on the father's side of the family. Charles' grandfather was Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), a physician, poet, zoologist, and philosopher. A powerful man of robust health, he seems to have been unusually progressive; for he was a teetotaler before teetotalism, an abolitionist before the anti-slavery movement, and he forshadowed the evolution theory in these lines in his poem, "The Temple of Nature":

> Organic life beneath the shoreless waves
> Was born, and nursed in ocean's pearly caves,
> First forms minute, unseen by spheric glass,
> Move on the mud or pierce the watery mass;
> These, as successive generations bloom,
> New powers acquire, and larger limbs assume,
> Where countless groups of vegetation spring,
> And breathing realms of fin and feet and wing . . .

His Father. Robert Waring, father of Charles, became a doctor at the age of twenty-one and maintained a happy and successful life in that profession until his death at the age of eighty-two. He was distinguished

especially for his powers of observation and for his capacity to win the confidence and the affections of his wide circle of patients. They looked up to him, feared him, yet loved him. Charles says of him that "he was the best judge of character I ever knew" and "incomparably the most acute observer." He took long walks with his son, teaching him to note the differences in the plants and tiny animals which they saw in gardens, pastures, and woods. He also taught his son a number of homely maxims, the most memorable in Charles' estimation being: "Never become the friend of anyone you cannot respect." A man of thrifty habits and of good business sense in his investments, he prospered financially so that he was able to bequeath to his children a large property. Charles was thus freed from worries about money matters throughout his life and enabled to devote his undivided attention to his scientific studies. He once declared that he did not gain much intellectually from his father but that "his example ought to have been of much moral service to all his children." An instance of that example was the occasion when his father had been called to attend a banker who had attempted suicide. The man was dead when the doctor arrived. It would have been quite natural for the doctor to have gone at once to the bank to withdraw his funds before the inevitable run on the bank. But he did not do so, for, wrote Charles, "it would have been dishonorable in my father to have used his professional knowledge for his private advantage." This sensi-

tivity in ethical matters may have been a greater heritage than the large property the father left the children.

His Mother. At the age of thirty Robert Darwin married Suzannah Wedgwood, daughter of Josiah Wedgwood, the noted pottery manufacturer. Josiah was a man of original and forceful personality, a chemist, an artist, and one who had "infinite capacity for taking pains." A miniature portrait shows Suzannah as a sweet-faced, happy young woman; and she is described as having a "gentle and sympathetic nature." She died when Charles was only eight years of age, and he remembered but little about her. From both sides of his house he thus received good blood. He was the true product of a fine stock. As a student once put it, he was "half way to Westminster Abbey when he was born."

His Childhood Home. The Darwin residence, known as "The Mount," overlooking the town of Shrewsbury, England, stands today very much as it did when Charles was born there on February 12, 1809, the same day that Lincoln was born in a Kentucky cabin on the American frontier, and in the same year that William E. Gladstone and Alfred Tennyson were born in England. The Darwin home was a large, substantial, red-brick mansion with a long terraced walk (still known as the Doctor's Walk) descending to the River Severn. A large Spanish chestnut tree grew beside this walk, and in its branches Charles and his favorite sister, Catherine, had each a special seat whence they could

gaze across the broad valley to the dim blue hills of Wales. On the Darwin place was a large garden with ornamental trees and shrubs and with a particularly fine collection of fruit trees, for Charles' father had a great fondness for such. From the house itself Charles as a lad could see most of the community—a quaint, beautiful little borough with winding lanes and narrow streets lined with Jacobean houses and stately churches. From below ascended the hum of the market on busy days and the chiming of the steeple bells on the Sabbath.

He spent much of his early years out of doors, walking, riding, and hunting. On some of his vacations he went to the summer home of his uncle, Josiah Wedgwood, in northern Wales. His rambles were seldom pointless; he hunted rare beetles and other insects, often walking thirty miles in a day in order to find them. His father sometimes lost patience with him for frittering away his time in such pursuits and occasionally berated him. In spite of such parental impatience Charles' home was pleasant, and he was surrounded by an atmosphere of affection, culture, and happy industry. And quietly pervading his days was an increasing interest in natural history.

Early Passion for Collecting. At the age of eight, in the year his mother died, Charles was sent to a day school kept by the Rev. G. Case, a Unitarian minister. Already he had begun to collect shells, seals, coins, and minerals, and was endeavoring to learn the names

of a large variety of plants. "The passion for collecting," he wrote, "which leads a man to be a systematic naturalist, a virtuoso, or a miser, was very strong in me and was clearly innate, as none of my sisters or brother ever had this taste." Perhaps, but there is no escaping the fact that his father, his grandfather, and many others of his forebears had the same passion for collecting and had developed it in the field of natural history. Just why it should have been passed on to Charles and leave his brother and sisters untouched remains a mystery.

He records that at this time he was "much given to inventing deliberate falsehoods" and says that this was done for the sake of causing excitement. He told a little boy that he could control the color of certain flowers by watering them with colored fluids, "which, of course, was a monstrous fable." At another time he gathered a considerable quantity of fruit from his father's trees and hid it in the shrubbery "and then ran in breathless haste to spread the news that he had discovered a horde of stolen fruit." These falsehoods sorely troubled his conscience later. He records with equal candor some of the lies told him by his playmates, who apparently found him quite gullible. The important thing for us is that out of these childish adventures in falsehoods, in which he was sometimes at the giving and at other times at the receiving end, he came to have an increasing realization of the need of evidence and factual data before accepting any proposition.

A School That Was a "Blank." At nine years he entered Dr. Butler's school. It was a boarding school but close enough to his home so that he could occasionally walk or run back and forth and thus keep up his family ties. Somewhere along this walk between his home and the school was a parapet with a drop of seven or eight feet on one side. Even at this early age he had already formed the habit of concentration, and one day he was so absorbed in his own thought that he walked over the edge of this parapet, falling the seven or eight feet to the ground. Significantly he does not remember his bruises but only his observation of the number of thoughts he had during the fall! As for Dr. Butler's school, he says that nothing could have been worse for him. It was a strictly classical school, "except for a little ancient geography and history." As a means of education he pronounced it "a blank." He had to commit to memory the lessons of the previous day. He could do this easily during the chapel service—but just as easily he forgot them within the next forty-eight hours. He mentions only two pleasures in the school: the translation of some of the Odes of Horace and the reading of a captivating book entitled *Wonders of the World,* which a schoolmate lent him. He read this book repeatedly and disputed with other boys about the veracity of some of the statements. He says it was this book that first gave him a wish to travel in remote countries.

At ten he went for three weeks with his family to a

seacoast village in Wales, where he became greatly interested in insects and moths which had not been found around his home. He wanted to make a collection of these insects, but his sister told him it was not right to kill them just for the sake of making a collection. He also began a study of birds about this time, making notes of their habits. "In my simplicity," he says, "I remember wondering why every gentleman did not become an ornithologist."

Seven years he remained in Dr. Butler's school, enduring the classics but showing zeal in the subjects which he found complex, especially geometry. He liked the clear proofs required by geometrical problems. He also liked the historical plays of Shakespeare and such poetry as Thomson's *Seasons* and the verses that were then being published by Byron and Scott.

When he was about fifteen and still in Dr. Butler's school, he became much interested in chemistry, largely through the influence of his brother Erasmus, who had made a laboratory in the tool house on the Darwin estate. Erasmus allowed Charles to be his assistant and to putter around the place and read books on chemistry, such as Henry and Parkes' *Chemical Catechism*. Together the boys made gases and many compounds, and Charles writes that they frequently worked late into the night. He regarded it as the best part of his education up to this time, "for it showed me practically the meaning of experimental science." At school when the boys found he was experimenting with

chemistry, they nicknamed him "Gas." Dr. Butler publicly rebuked him for wasting his time on such a useless subject.

Amateur Doctor. His father now withdrew him from Dr. Butler's school, since he seemed to be making so little progress. During the next few months Charles became interested in some poor people of Shrewsbury, a dozen or more women and children in need of medical help. He visited them, noting their symptoms, reporting them to his father, and getting his father to prescribe for them. Charles then filled the prescriptions, presumably in his own little chemical laboratory. On the basis of the interest he displayed in this experience, his father thought he had in him the qualities of a good physician. (Chief of those qualities, he held, was the capacity for winning confidence.) So he sent the boy to Edinburgh to study medicine.

Edinburgh for Medicine. But Charles did little better at Edinburgh. He thought the lectures there intolerably dull. He afterward regretted that he had not been urged to practice dissection and that he did not learn to draw, as these skills would have helped him immeasurably in his later work. He found his major interest in attending the clinical wards and in making friends with a few of the men in the field of natural history. On two occasions he attended operating clinics, but the sufferings of the patients were so great (it was before the day of anaesthetics) that he fled from the room before the operations were completed

and never afterward attended one. So he made up his mind that the study of medicine was not for him. He knew that his father had acquired considerable property, a part of which he would one day inherit. His father, however, did not fancy the idea of having his son without a profession. He reluctantly gave up the idea of making a doctor of him and resolved to have the boy trained for the ministry.

Cambridge for the Ministry. At the age of eighteen, therefore, we find Charles beginning a three-year course at Cambridge. He liked the thought of being a country clergyman. In spite of his good academic record (he stood tenth in his class), he says he got nothing from his studies during these years and that the chief value of his school life was the opportunity it afforded him for independent study of natural history and for association with kindred minds. He mentions two books, Humboldt's *Personal Narrative* and Herschel's *Introduction to the Study of Natural Philosophy,* which stirred up in him "a burning zeal to add even the most humble contribution to the noble structure of natural science." As a practical but minor step in this direction, he pursued his independent study and collection of beetles, not only in Cambridge but on his vacations. This gave him more pleasure than any of his academic studies. In his autobiography, edited by his son Francis, he tells a story, now famous, which illustrates his zeal in collecting:

One day on tearing off some old bark, I saw two rare beetles, and seized one in each hand; then I saw a third and new kind, which I could not bear to lose, so that I popped the one which I held in my right hand into my mouth. Alas! it ejected some intensely acrid fluid, which burnt my tongue so that I was forced to spit the beetle out, which was lost, as was the third one.[1]

His father, however, did not share his enthusiasm for nature study. He began to fear his son was becoming an idler. In a moment of anger he rebuked him sternly for wasting his time. "You care for nothing," he said, "but shooting, dogs, and rat-catching, and you will be a disgrace to yourself and to your family."

Great Friends. But in Cambridge Charles was forming associations with a few great men who did not consider him a "disgrace." Chief among these was Professor Henslow, the noted botanist, who used to conduct field excursions on foot across country or down the river in a barge, lecturing on the plants and animals observed en route. Charles, although not enrolled in Henslow's courses, joined these excursions and found them delightful. Henslow also kept open house once a week when all undergraduates and some older members of the university interested in science gathered at his home. Charles attended these regularly. He became so attached to Henslow, and Henslow to him, that the

[1] Francis Darwin, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin,* D. Appleton, New York, 1925, p. 43.

great teacher invited him on long walks, and young Darwin became known as "the man who walks with Henslow." In his autobiography Charles says, "His knowledge was great in botany, entomology, chemistry, mineralogy, and geology. His strongest taste was to draw conclusions from long-continued minute observations. His judgment was excellent and his whole mind well balanced . . ."

Charles also formed attachments with Sir J. McIntosh, "the best converser on grave subjects to whom I ever listened"; with Leonard Jenyns, an exceptional student in natural history; and with a Mr. Dawes, who afterward became dean of Hereford and famous for his success in the education of the poor. All these men were kindred spirits and used occasionally to take distant excursions into the country, allowing young Darwin to accompany them. "Looking back," he says, "I infer that there must have been something in me a little superior to the common run of youths, otherwise the above-mentioned men, so much older than I and higher in academical position, would never have allowed me to associate with them. Certainly I was not aware of any such superiority."

Ready for Clerical Orders. His three years at Cambridge he counted the most joyful of his happy life, partly because of these associations and partly because he was in good health—good health was soon to become a stranger to him. After he had taken his final examinations he had to wait some months before he could

receive his degree. To utilize his time he took a short Sedgwick. On his return he found a letter from geological trip into northern Wales with Professor Professor Henslow telling him of a scientific expedition that was about to start around the world, an expedition which he could join as naturalist, sharing the captain's cabin, provided he would volunteer his services without pay. This expedition was the famous voyage of the "Beagle." It was under the auspices of the British government; its object was "to complete the survey of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, commenced under Captain King in 1826 to 1830; to survey the shores of Chile, Peru, and some islands in the Pacific; and to carry a chain of chronometrical measurements round the world." [2] The voyage would take some years and would mean that he would not enter the ministry at once. Nevertheless he wanted to go.

An Opportunity He Almost Missed. He went home and talked the matter over with his father. The latter objected, but added, "If you can find any man of common sense who advises you to go, I will give my consent." Thereupon Charles wrote Henslow declining the offer, and the next day set out on a shooting expedition on his uncle's estate. Telling his uncle of the offer, he discovered that he not only had a sympathetic hearer, but one who volunteered to drive at once the thirty miles to Shrewsbury and urge Dr. Darwin to consent

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

to his son's going. This he did, and Charles was soon on his way to interview Captain Fitz-Roy. The Captain accepted him but said afterward that he came near not doing so because he did not like the shape of Charles' nose. Anyone with a nose like that, he felt, would lack the necessary energy and determination for the voyage. Thus Charles Darwin came near missing the experience which he counted the most important in his whole career. On so slight a matter as the shape of his nose and his uncle's willingness to drive thirty miles hung the determining factor of the career of one of the greatest scientists of all time!

Twenty-two and a Turning Point. The next five years on the voyage of the "Beagle" he counted the most important in his life. We are concerned here not with the researches and findings of young Darwin, but with what went on in his mind. Something significant took place there, for when his father greeted him five years later he ejaculated, "Why even the shape of his head is altered!" He started on the voyage a comparatively unknown divinity student of twenty-two years, fully expecting to enter the ministry. When he returned, his name and studies in natural history were being talked about among the leading scientists of England.

Voyage of the "Beagle." What happened in those five years? Charles Darwin found himself, and he found his life work. He left behind him an educational system that he had only endured, a system which sup-

posedly trained him for a vocation by teaching him *deductively* a smattering of many traditional branches of learning. He entered a vast laboratory where for five years he could pursue his avocation, the study of natural history, by the *inductive* methods of actual observation. He went aboard a ship where his cabin space was so small that he was forced to become methodical in his work to keep from bumping into himself and becoming entangled in his own paraphernalia. At sea he caught fish and hundreds of marine animals by dragging a net behind the vessel. He studied every specimen and wrote up his observations in a journal which he kept daily. When the boat cast anchor, he went ashore in South America or on the islands of the Atlantic and Pacific and collected land birds, animals, minerals, and plants by the thousand. He carried them back to the vessel for analysis and further notes. He learned to budget every minute of his time and found that the secret of saving hours was in taking care of the minutes. "I worked to the utmost during the voyage," he wrote, "from the mere pleasure of investigation, and from my strong desire to add a few facts to the great mass of facts in natural science. But I was also ambitious to take a fair place among scientific men . . ." He made every book he read bear directly on his studies. Even in his hours of relaxation and amusement he usually had a book at hand. But in these hours it was apt to be Milton or Wordsworth or Coleridge.

A Transformation. And so, gradually but surely,

there came a transformation in his inner life. The young man who found joy in shooting birds became the young man who found greater joy in observing them and learning from them some of the secrets of Nature. The indifferent candidate for clerical orders became the enthusiastic research student in natural science. The student who all his life had been lectured *at* became the original investigator and collector of facts on a project of his own. As the weeks grew into months and the months into years, his journal took on volume and weight. He devoted some portions of each day to writing in it, describing with painstaking care as vividly as he could all he had seen that day. Parts of this journal he sent back to England to serve as letters to his family and to his scientific friends. Whenever he found anything new in plant or animal life or in minerals, or anything that excited him, he looked forward to writing it down either in his journal or in the separate letters.

Certain results followed these changes in the inner Darwin. He developed the habit of energetic industry and of concentrated attention to whatever task he undertook. He learned to systematize his mass of data and to record his observations clearly and vividly. "I feel sure," he wrote long afterward, "that it was this training which has enabled me to do whatever I have done in science."

Another result of no less importance was that the scientists in England who read his notes and letters

began to talk among themselves. This young Darwin was collecting a mountain of evidence that actually proved the evolution hypothesis the older scientists had guessed at. Professor Sedgwick called upon his father and told him that his son would take a place among the leading scientific men. Professor Henslow read some of young Darwin's letters to the Philosophical Society of Cambridge and printed them for private distribution. The collection of fossil bones Darwin sent home became the talk of the hour among paleontologists. His sisters wrote him of this; and when toward the end of the long voyage he received their letter, he was fired with new zeal. "After reading this letter," he wrote, "I clambered over the mountains of Ascension with a bounding step, and made the volcanic rocks resound under my geological hammer." Thus it was that the unpromising young divinity student who shipped aboard the "Beagle" at twenty-two disembarked from it five years later an enthusiastic young scientist.

His Domestic Life. Before we take up the story of the revolution he started in science, let us draw apart, as he did, from his public career and follow him in his domestic life. He always kept the two separate, even though his home was the place where he wrote his books. At the age of thirty he married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood. For three years they lived in London and then moved to Down House near Arpington, Kent. There they lived happily, reared seven children, and gathered about them a contented group of maids,

workmen, neighbors, townsmen, horses, pigeons, dogs, and cats. But already Darwin's abdominal trouble was beginning to make inroads upon his health. To conserve his strength he adopted a regimen of self-discipline to which he adhered for the rest of his life. Every moment of the day he allotted to some particular activity—certain hours for study, for correspondence, for experiment, for writing, for roaming in the garden, yard, and stable, and for the cultivation of his many friendships, to which he was most loyal. His wife, his son Francis, and one of his daughters served him alternately as secretaries. "A man who dares to waste one hour of time," he said, "has not discovered the value of life." His one self-indulgence seems to have been snuff-taking. In later years he smoked an occasional cigarette, but it never took the place of snuff. He kept the snuffbox in the hall of his home so that he would have to walk in order to get a pinch. His family noted that he had often to leave his study to go into the hall "to make sure the hall door had not been left open." His son, Francis, whose thorough and definitive biography is the basis of this sketch, speaks of his kindness to all his children and his great interest in their plans. He had unbounded patience with them and allowed them great freedom in the development of their own personalities. He did not intrude in their private affairs, but he surrounded their lives with his affection. As his years mounted and his strength failed, he went out less and less into the world. He confined his walks

to his own garden. There he had a system of carrying a small pile of rocks piece by piece from one point to another. When he had carried the last rock to the new pile, he knew that his day's stint was accomplished. Meanwhile, he could be absorbed in his own thoughts. Beyond his garden wall the world could roar its angry defiance of those thoughts, as they appeared in book form; but his home was his castle where he found peace and happiness and where he worked in the serene confidence that whatever truth he discovered would live and serve humanity long after the protests of the moment had died away.

His First Books. We return now to his public life. When he began collecting his specimens of plant and animal life aboard the "Beagle," he had no thought of writing a book. But as he studied the geology of the islands and countries he visited and realized that those rocks had a story to tell about the history of the earth and that he was gradually learning to translate that story simply and understandingly, it dawned upon him that he must write it for others who would not study the facts first-hand as he was doing. The book, *Geological Observations,* resulted. One day Captain Fitz-Roy asked him to read some of his journal and declared that it would be worth publishing. That journal, carefully revised and edited, made the second book, *The Voyage of the "Beagle,"* which went through several editions. A third was inevitable—*The Zoology of the Voyage of the "Beagle."* Then followed *Cirripedia,*

a two-volume work that cost him eight years labor and concerning which he wrote, "I doubt whether the work was worth so much time"; *Origin of Species,* in 1857; *Variation of Animals Under Domestication,* in 1860; *Fertilization of Orchids,* in 1862; *Expression of Emotions in Men and Animals,* in 1872; *Descent of Man,* in 1871; and *Power of Movement in Plants,* in 1880.

Not one of these books was rushed to the printer. He had learned exceeding carefulness and refused to allow anything to be published until he had gone over it again and again and again, checking the manuscript for accuracy, clearness, and conservative statement. It was fully two years after his return before the first book was published. During all this time he was going over his findings and results with Lyell, Henslow, Robert Brown, and other scientists, and preparing his manuscripts in the light of their criticisms as well as of his own deliberation.

His "Origin of Species." His first books, confined as they were to matters of geology and zoology, caused no particular stir among the public generally, although they gave him the place among the leading scientific men Professor Sedgwick had prophesied. But his *Origin of Species* set the world afire with a controversy which has raged until this day, though its flames appear now only on the more remote frontiers of culture. It set forth his theory of evolution by natural selection.

Since this book has had so profound an effect upon

the thinking of the world, and since Darwin counted it the chief work of his life, we should be clear concerning what he attempted in it and the background of that attempt. The popular notion that Darwin here gave to the world the theory of evolution is quite wrong. That theory has been glimpsed by Aristotle and other ancients of Greece and Rome. Moreover, a few of the more alert scientists of Europe had been moving in the general direction of evolution for a century.[3] A spirit

[3] Buffon, writing his treatise on Natural History, during the time of Louis XV, suggested the possibility of a new species arising through modification. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, a French zoologist (1772-1844), in 1795 cautiously advanced the same idea. Goethe (1749-1832), in Germany, had written . . . "that all the more perfect organic natures, such as fishes, amphibians, birds, and mammals, with man at their head, were formed at first on the one original type, which still daily changes." Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, had, as we have seen, foreshadowed the evolution theory in a poem.

Eight years before Darwin was born, Lamarck (1744-1832) gave to the world the boldest and most comprehensive evolutionary theory yet advanced. According to Darwin, Lamarck "did the eminent service of arousing the attention to the probability of all change in the organic as well as in the inorganic world, being the result of law and not miraculous intervention."

In other sciences, too, "there was the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." Geologists had felt that fossil remains indicated constant cataclysms and fresh creations. But a William Smith, an ingenious surveyor, came to believe that a fixed order of sequence could everywhere be traced among the various geological strata. A score of men in different countries were maintaining that all existing evidence could be understood by processes still at work. Kant had suggested the Nebular Hypothesis to explain the origin of the physical universe. Laplace adopted it, and Sir William Herschel further refined it.

Herbert Spencer, by 1852,, seven years before the arrival of the *Origin of Species,* had already accepted the "natural selection" idea by *a priori* reasoning. Agassiz was hesitating and raising difficulties; Treviranus, a German naturalist and biologist (1776-1837), was ardently proclaiming his adhesion to Spencer's theory; Bates,

critical of the belief in the immutability of species was slowly creeping into the house of orthodox scientific thought.

Darwin was not the creator of the evolution theory. Nor was he its Moses. He was rather its Joshua. Moses saw the promised land from afar; Joshua led the children of Israel into it. The scientists before Darwin had only postulated the evolutionary theory; he demonstrated it. They had brought a cartload of evidence; he brought a shipload. Specifically, what he did was to present a mass of evidence to prove (1) not only that evolution had taken place within each species but that higher species including man had themselves evolved from lower ones; and (2) that the process by which this evolution had taken place was natural selec-

the English naturalist (1825-1892), saw it written on the wings of Brazilian butterflies; Alfred Russell Wallace had worked it out in crude form on the Malayan Peninsula; Wallaston in the Madeiras was pointing out the strange adaptation of the curious local snails and beetles. Von Buch, a Prussian geologist (1774-1853), in the Canaries was slowly coming to the conclusion that variety changed into permanent species. Lecoq, a French geologist (1802-1871), and Von Bear, a Russian embryologist (1792-1876), were arriving by botanical and embryological routes. Dean Herbert, from profound horticultural insight, maintained that kinds were only mere fixed "sports." Patrick Matthew in a work on *Navil Timber* pointed to "natural selection." Robert Chambers in 1844 published his *Vestiges of Creation.* It was not an accident, but an incident, that Alfred Russell Wallace should send a hastily written paper to Darwin advancing the same idea. Said Wallace, "Why should Darwin not have the credit! He worked twenty years, while I hastily wrote mine in a week." For a more detailed account see Darwin's own "Historical Sketch of the Progress of Opinion on the Origin of Species," pp. xiii-xxvi, Sixth Edition of *Origin of Species.*

tion; that is, those forms survived and developed which were best fitted to win in the struggle for existence.

How He Worked Out "The Origin." How Darwin came to adopt this theory and to labor upon it twenty years before he published it, he tells us in his autobiography and in the first chapter of the work. This explanation of the origin of species had occurred to him while on the voyage of the "Beagle." On his return home he opened his first notebook on the subject in 1837 on the assumption "that something might perhaps be made out on this question by patiently accumulating and reflecting on all sorts of facts which could possibly have any bearing upon it." Without any theory at first he collected facts on a wholesale scale concerning domesticated animals and plants. He interviewed breeders and gardeners, read extensively, and digested hundreds of printed inquiries and articles. He soon perceived that when a breeder of stock wanted to breed up a certain kind of animal, he went about it by the process of selecting those individaul males and females which had the desired traits. The same held true for horticulturalists who wished to improve the varieties of apples or berries or plants of any kind. Everywhere the basic principle was selection. But how selection could be applied to organisms living in a state of nature without the intervening hand of man still remained a mystery.

One day some fifteen months after he had begun this inquiry, Darwin read Malthus' *Essay on the Principles*

of Population. Malthus held that population tends to increase faster than the means of subsistence, but is kept in bounds by a series of checks. It immediately occurred to Darwin that under these conditions those variations which would somehow pass or surmount the checks would tend to be preserved; the others would be destroyed. The result ultimately would be the formation of a new species, just as surely as if an intelligent person such as a breeder or horticulturalist were consciously and deliberately setting out with that end in view. "Here then I had at last got a theory by which to work; but I was so anxious to avoid prejudice, that I determined not for some time to write even the briefest sketch of it. In June 1842 I first allowed myself the satisfaction of writing a very brief abstract of my theory in pencil in 35 pages; and this was enlarged during the summer of 1844 into one of 230 pages." [4]

Once he had this key to the mystery of how some plants and animals had been selected for preservation and others rejected, he began to apply it to the enormous mass of data he had collected. His book is a record of that application. In the first chapter he tells of these twenty years of study saying, "I hope that I may be excused for entering on these personal details, as I give them to show that I have not been hasty in coming to a decision." Had the critics who pounced

[4] Francis Darwin, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

upon the book controlled their own haste in similar fashion, they might have become less ridiculous in the eyes of succeeding generations.

The first edition of 1,250 copies was sold out on the day of publication. It was translated into almost every European tongue. Darwin attributed its success—a remarkable one considering its solid character—to his having long before written two condensed sketches and then a much longer manuscript which he in turn abstracted. By this means he was able "to select the more striking facts and conclusions."

Violent Opposition. But the successful sale of the book did not mean it was received with open-armed gratitude. On the contrary, it met with the most violent objection and denunciation from theologians and scientists. Theologians felt that Darwin had taken away man's soul and that his whole interpretation of life was unbiblical and irreligious. Bishop Wilberforce called Darwin a "flighty" person who endeavored "to prop up his utterly rotten fabric of guess and speculation." He characterized the book as one which "contradicts the revealed relation of the creation to its Creator." The protests of the clergy varied all the way from this comparatively dignified utterance of Wilberforce to that of an emotional revivalist, who exulted, "Darwin! There's a man I have trounced a hundred times from my pulpit. Thank God I have never read a line he has written!"

The orthodox scientists of the day were quite as

violent. Thomas Huxley, recalling the reception of the book, said that the scientific supporters of Mr. Darwin's theory were "numerically extremely insignificant." Herschel declared that the book advocated "the law of higgledy-piggledy." Owen and Agassiz denounced it unsparingly. Scientists and religionists united in their attack on the ground that Darwin's theory of natural selection in the struggle for existence left everything to chance, robbed the universe of any design, and undermined belief in divine intelligence.

Yet the "numerically extremely insignificant" minority were destined to increase in number. Huxley said that the book had the effect upon them of a "flash of light which to a man who has lost himself in a dark night suddenly reveals a road which, whether it takes him straight home or not, certainly goes his way."

To all the outpourings of "angry nonsense" from the majority of scientists and the "sanctimonious scoldings" of the clergy Darwin offered a calm and kindly reception, spending many hours in trying to answer letters from all sorts of persons who raised questions and protests. He refused to become controversial. His attitude said in effect, "If you don't like my explanation of all these facts, what better one can you offer?" But the critics found it much easier to curse Darwin than to answer that question.

His Religion. Since the objections to Darwin's theory came so largely on religious grounds, his own religious beliefs were eagerly sought. He was reticent in speaking

or writing on the subject of religion simply because he felt that he had not given the subject the same thorough painstaking care he had given to his scientific investigations. In a letter to Mr. J. Fordyce in 1879, he said, "In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older) but not always, that an Agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind." When in 1871 Dr. F. E. Abbott of Cambridge, Massachusetts urged him to express himself further on this subject, he replied:

I cannot comply with your request for the following reasons; and excuse me for giving them in some detail, as I should be very sorry to appear in your eyes ungracious. My health is very weak: I *never* pass twenty-four hours without many hours of discomfort, when I can do nothing whatever. I have thus, also, lost two whole consecutive months this season. Owing to this weakness, and my head being often giddy, I am unable to master new subjects requiring much thought, and can deal only with old materials. At no time am I a quick thinker or writer; whatever I have done in science has solely been by long pondering, patience, and industry.

Now I have never systematically thought much on religion in relation to science, or on morals in relation to society; and without steadily keeping my mind on such subjects for a *long* period, I am really incapable of writing anything worth sending to the *Index*.[5]

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 276.

Although Darwin could give no comfort to those who wanted their own religious problems enlightened, they could not deny his rugged honesty, his utter sincerity, and his gentle courtesy. These, after all, are not the least virtues which religion cultivates.

When he went on board the "Beagle" at the age of twenty-two, he was quite orthodox and found himself heartily laughed at by several officers because he quoted the Bible as an unanswerable authority. But as his investigations proceeded he came to see that the Old Testament was no more to be trusted as a book of science than the sacred books of the Hindus. Further reflection led him to give up his belief in the miracles in the New Testament, at least so far as these miracles represented a breaking of the laws of nature. A God who would not abide by the laws he himself had made was not worthy of worship. Darwin did not deny the existence of God. He simply held that if there is a God he must be law abiding, and therefore miracles as a divine breaking of law were not credible.

His belief in the orthodox doctrines of the church he gave up slowly and reluctantly. In his autobiography, written in 1876, he says that the belief in immortality and that of a First Cause still appealed to him, although they were in the realm of mystery.

With respect to immortality, nothing shows me [so clearly] how strong and almost instinctive a belief it is, as the consideration of the view now held by most physicists, namely, that the sun with all the planets will

in time grow too cold for life, unless indeed some great body dashes into the sun, and thus gives it fresh life. Believing as I do that man in the distant future will be a far more perfect creature than he now is, it is an intolerable thought that he and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued slow progress. To those who fully admit the immortality of the human soul, the destruction of our world will not appear so dreadful.

Another source of conviction in the existence of God, connected with the reason, and not with the feelings, impresses me as having much more weight. This follows from the extreme difficulty or rather impossibility of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity of looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look at a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist. This conclusion was strong in my mind about the time, as far as I can remember, when I wrote the *Origin of Species;* and it is since that time that it has very gradually, with many fluctuations, become weaker. But then arises the doubt, can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animals, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions?

I cannot pretend to throw the least light on such abstruse problems. The mystery of the beginning of all things is insoluble by us; and I for one must be content to remain an Agnostic.[6]

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

Darwin was not an orthodox Christian, but that is far from saying that he was irreligious. He was first of all a seeker after truth; and the greatest of all religious teachers said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." A German phrenologist once declared that Darwin had a bump of reverence big enough for ten priests. His reverence was not for creeds or churches; it was reverence for facts—but it was still reverence. Before facts he stood humble and uncovered. His kindness and his generosity to friends, enemies, and strangers; his patience under criticism, and his uncomplaining endurance of pain—surely these, like his honesty and his sincerity, are the fruits of the religious life. And by its fruits religion, like everything else in life, must ultimately be judged.

Punishment or Sacrifice? We have spoken of the loss of his health and of his faith. In the course of time he lost also his appreciation of music and poetry and beauty. The older theologians used to cite this loss of his aesthetic taste as the punishment of God. It was nothing of the sort. It was the sacrifice of a man who had given up his all to the concentrated study of natural history. He says:

My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive. A man with a mind more highly organized or better constituted than mine, would

not, I suppose, have thus suffered; and if I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature.[7]

And so we come to the end of the life of the man who was probably the greatest scientist England ever produced and certainly the one more violently attacked than any other of his generation. He was an old man when he wrote the lines just quoted and not far from his death in 1882. His health was gone. His aesthetic tastes were atrophied. Some of those who were dearest to him had already passed on. Most of his scientific friends had turned against him; and he was being assailed in three-fourths of the pulpits of England, Europe, and America. But he had started a revolution in biological science. He had turned the stream of the world's thought into new channels.

Sources of His Power. The power by which Darwin accomplished his revolution in thought was no supernatural force. It was the power which had come to him out of a long line of ancestors disciplined to scientific research; out of a home which continued that tradition and surrounded him with an atmosphere of

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 82.

culture; out of a childhood interest in bugs and birds and dogs; out of a five-year concentrated study of that interest on the voyage of the "Beagle"; out of a cultivated habit of budgeting every hour of his time; out of a studied practice of making friendships with men he respected and looked up to; out of a developed capacity for observation and for amassing and analyzing data and criticizing his results over and over again, publishing them only when he felt sure of their accuracy; and finally out of a refinement of spirit by which he had learned to prize honesty above agreement and truth above orthodoxy.

His critics charged him with robbing life of its purpose. He found in it a new and vaster meaning. At the close of his *Origin of Species* he wrote these lines which seem to be the calm conclusion of his own spirit standing humbly and reverently before Mother Nature and reflecting upon her laws of natural selection which he had discovered:

Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

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